

The Story of Creation in the Mandaean
Holy Book the Ginza Rba

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Abstract:

Sources of the research: The Mandaean holy books and scriptures in addition to old Moslem writers and contemporary western scholars' works.

The purpose of the research:

The research aims to translate the Mandaean Story of Creation, directly from the Mandaean manuscript. Four other Ginza manuscripts from the Oriental and India office at the British Library in London were used to compile a critical apparatus of variants. Book three, or the Book of Creation, is the largest tractate of the Mandeans' holy book the "Ginza Rba". The Ginza names this tractate as *raza usidra qadmaia d-šuta haita qadmaita* "The Mystery and the First Book of the First Living Doctrine". This tractate includes the cosmogony; the origin of the World of Light and the World of Darkness, the rise of the First Great Life, the Second Life (Yōšamin), the Third Life (Abatur) and the Fourth Life (Ptahil); the Demiurge who created the cosmos and Tibil (the earthly world). It also narrates the creation of the Mandaean redeemer Manda d-Hiia ("Gnosis of Life") and his descent to the Underworld and his triumph against the forces of darkness. It narrates the creation of Adam and Eve and the descent of the *nišimta* (soul) into the *šṭōna* (the human body). Tractate three also includes an elaborate description of the demonic Rūha and her planetary sons and her attempts to seduce Adam in order to entrap him in the world.

The research consists of three parts:

- (1) The introduction: The Mandeans and the Question of Their Origin, The Mandaean system, The Main Characteristic Rituals of the Mandeans, The Mandaean manuscripts.

- (2) Analysis of the narrative: The First Account of the Story of Creation, The Second Account of the Story of Creation, The Third account of the Story of Creation.**
- (3) The Transcription and Translation of the Manuscript.**

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Contents:

<u>Abbreviations</u>	10
<u>The Mandaic Alphabet</u>	12
<u>§1 Introduction</u>	14
<u>§1.1</u> The Mandaean and the Question of their Origin	15
<u>§1.2</u> The Mandaean System	23
<u>§1.3</u> Mandaism and Gnosticism	25
<u>§1.3.1</u> General Parallels and Differences between Gnosticism and Mandaism	29
<u>§1.4</u> The Main Characteristic Rituals of the Madaeans	31
<u>§1.4.1</u> Baptism ܡܫܒܘܬܐ <i>mašbuta</i>	31
<u>§1.4.2</u> Ascent of the Soul ܡܫܩܝܬܐ <i>masqita</i>	35
<u>§1.5</u> The Mandaean Calendar	37
<u>§1.6</u> Mandaean Feasts	41
<u>§1.6.1</u> The Five Days of Creation ܝܡܝ ܠܚܝܬܐ <i>ymay lḥitā</i> Parwanaiia (Panja)	41
<u>§1.6.2</u> The New Year Dihba Rba ܕܝܗܒܐ ܪܒܐ <i>dihba rba</i>	42
<u>§1.6.3</u> The Little New Year ܕܝܗܒܐ ܕܩܠܝܐ <i>dihba d-qaliā</i> Dihba d-Šišlam Rba	44
<u>§1.6.4</u> The Little Feast ܕܝܗܒܐ ܗܢܝܢܐ <i>dihba hnina</i>	44
<u>§1.7</u> Curses and Incantations ܠܘܬܐܬܐ ܘܩܝܪܝܬܐ <i>luṭata uqiriata</i>	45
<u>§1.8</u> The Mandaean Manuscripts	50

§1.9	The Ginza Rba (The Great Treasure)	52
§1.9.1	The Right Ginza	52
§1.9.2	The Left Ginza	55
§1.10	The Ginza used in this Research (GRS)	56
§1.11	The Mandaean Script	61
§1.12	Book III of the Ginza Rba	63
§1.13	The Mandaean Story of Creation	64
§1.14	The Main Features of Mandaic Poetry	67
§2.	<u>Analysis of the Narrative</u>	71
§2.1	<u>The First Account of the Theogony</u>	72
§2.1.1	<i>Pira</i> (the Fruit) ܦܝܪܐ	73
§2.1.2	<i>Ayar</i> (Ether) ܐܝܪܐ	77
§2.1.3	<i>Mana</i> (Intelligence, Vessel) ܡܢܐ	80
§2.1.4	<i>Yardina</i> (Jordan) ܝܪܕܝܢܐ	88
§2.1.5	<i>Škina</i> (celestial dwelling) ܫܟܝܢܐ	93
	<u>Chart A</u>	99
§2.2	<u>The Second Account of the Theogony</u>	100
§2.2.1	<i>Yura</i> ܝܘܪܐ	102
§2.2.2	The Life ܠܝܬܐ <i>Hiia</i>	104
§2.2.3	The Second Life (Yōšamin) <i>Hiia Tiniania</i>	107
§2.2.4	The Streams of Water <i>Hapiqia Mia</i>	
	ܫܘܠܬܐ ܡܝܐ	112

§2.2.5	The Third Life Abatur ܐܒܬܘܪ	115
§2.2.5.1	Abatur Rama	115
§2.2.5.2	Abatur in the Incantations	119
§2.2.5.3	Abatur of the Scales	120
§2.2.5.4	Abatur <i>Rašn uRast</i>	123
§2.2.5.5	Abatur, the Symbol of Virility	126
§2.2.5.6	Abatur, the Heavenly Priest	127
§2.2.5.7	Abatur, the Divine Secretary	128
§2.2.6	The Fourth Life ܐܬܗܝܠ Ptahil	129
§2.2.6.1	Ptahil: A Mandaean ‘Uthra or Egyptian Demiurge?	129
§2.2.6.2	Ptahil: The Creator of the Material World	133
§2.2.6.3	The Creation of Adam	137
Chart B		141
§2.2.7	Manda ܕ-ܗܝܝܐ (Gnosis of Life) ܡܢܕܐ ܕ-ܗܝܝܐ	142
§2.2.7.1	The True Apostle of Light	142
§2.2.7.2	The Creation of Manda ܕ-ܗܝܝܐ	144
§2.2.7.3	Manda ܕ-ܗܝܝܐ: The Mandaean Redeemer	146
§2.2.7.4	Manda ܕ-ܗܝܝܐ and John the Baptist	148
§2.2.7.5	Manda ܕ-ܗܝܝܐ the Warrior	149

§2.2.7.5.1	Manda d-Hiia's Weapons	149
§2.2.7.5.2	Manda d-Hiia restrains the rebellious uhtras	149
§2.2.7.5.3	Manda d-Hiia's Encounter with the Powers of Darkness	152
§2.2.7.5.4	Manda d-Hiia's Battle with the King of Darkness ('Ur)	154
§2.2.7.5.5	Manda d-Hiia thwarts Rūha's plans to seduce Adam	156
§2.2.7.6	The Life Praises Manda d-Hiia for his Victory	158
§2.2.7.8	Manda d-Hiia, the Conjugal Advisor	159
§2.3	<u>The Third Account of the Theogony</u>	161
§2.3.1	The King of Light	163
§2.3.2	<i>Ziwa uNhūra</i> Radiance and Light	166
§2.3.3	<i>'Šata Haita</i> The Living Fire	169
§2.3.4	The 'Uhtras	170
§2.3.5	<i>Alma d-Nhūra</i> The World of Light	175
§2.3.6	<i>Alma d-Hšuka</i> The World of Darkness	178
§2.3.7	Malka d-Hšuka The King of Darkness ('Ur)	181
§2.3.8	The Army of the King of Darkness	185
§2.3.9	Rūha the Queen of Darkness	186
§2.3.9.1	Rūha: The Mother of the Seven	

	Planets and the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac and the Five Planets	188
§2.3.9.2	Rūha the Seductress	189
§2.3.9.3	The End of Rūha	192
<u>Chart C</u>		193
§3	<u>The Text</u>	194
§4	<u>Translation and Notes</u>	261
<u>Bibliography</u>		565

Abbreviations

AHW	<i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i>
AJSL	The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature
ARR	<i>Alma Rišaia Rba</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, A Pair of Naṣōraean Commentaries, Leiden 1963)
ARZ	<i>Alma Rišaia Zuṭa</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, A Pair of Naṣōraean Commentaries, Leiden 1963)
ATŠ	<i>The Thousand and Twelve Questions</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, Berlin 1960)
Jb	<i>Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer</i> (tr. M. Lidzbarski, Giessen 1915)
DY	The Mandaean Manuscript <i>Draša d-Yahia</i> “the Book of John”
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BSOS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies
CP	<i>The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, Leiden 1959)
DA	<i>Diwan Abatur</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, Vatican City 1950)
DJPA	A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (M. Sokoloff, Bar Ilan University Press, 1990)
DM'L	<i>The Scroll of Exalted Kingship</i> (tr. J. J. Buckley, Connecticut 1993)
DMHZ	<i>Diwan Maṣbuta d-Hibil-Ziwa</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, Vatican City 1953)
GRL	<i>Ginza Rba Left</i>
GRR	<i>Ginza Rba Right</i>
HG	<i>The Harran Gawaita</i> (tr. E. S. Drower, Vatican City 1953)
HR	History of Religions
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JD	<i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmid Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrash Literature</i> (M. Jastrow, New York 1996)
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archeology
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JR	Journal of Religion
JRAS	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society

JRCAS	Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
MD	<i>A Mandaic Dictionary</i> (E. S. Drower, R. Macuch, Oxford 1963)
MG	<i>Mandäische Grammataik</i> (Nöldke, Halle 1875)
MHZ	<i>Masbuta d-Hibil Ziwa</i> [The Baptism of Hibil-Ziwa]
MII	<i>The Mandaean of Iraq and Iran</i> (E. D. Drower, Oxford 1937)
OT	Old Testament
Q	<i>The Mandaean Book Qalista</i>
QŠR	<i>Qabin d-Šišlam Rba</i> “the Marriage ceremony of the Great Šišlam”
SA	The Secret Adam (tr. E. S. Drower, Oxford 1960).
ŠQŠR	<i>Šarh d-Qabin d-Šišlam Rba</i> “Explanatory Commentary on the Marriage-Ceremony of the Great Šišlam”, (tr. E. S. Drower, Rome 1950)
ṬTŠR	<i>Ṭraša d-Taga d-Šišlam Rba</i> “The Coronation of the Great Šišlam”, (tr. E. S. Drower, Leiden 1962).

𐌱	𐌰	šā	𐌲	Šī	𐌳	šū	𐌴	āš	𐌵	š	š
𐌶	𐌷	tā	𐌸	tī	𐌹	tū	𐌺	āt	𐌻	t	t, θ
𐌼									𐌾	<u>d</u>	(a)d
𐌿									𐌿	k <u>d</u>	k <u>d</u>

§ 1. Introduction

§ 1. Introduction

§ 1.1 - The Mandaeans and the Question of their Origin:

In the hot and marshy areas along the Tigris and Euphrates in the southern Mesopotamia and along the Karun River which flows through the lowland of Iran (Khuzistan) and, like the Tigris and Euphrates, empties into the Shaṭ-al-Arab and then into the Gulf, there dwells a small community of *Mandaiia*, Mandaeans (“Gnostics”). Their Arab neighbors call them *ṣubba*, derived from صبعة (صبغ) “to immerse or submerge”, and refers to their frequent baptism “*maṣbuta*”.¹ The Qur'an mentions the *al-ṣab'ūn* الصابئون in three *sūra* along with the Jews and Christians.² The Moslem historians called them the Ṣabians³ of the swamps (صابئة البطائح) or *al-Mughtasila* (المغتلسة) “those who wash” and they were numerous in the swamps and in the region of Dast-i Maysan.⁴ Almas'ūdī tells of a Ṣābian sect called *Kīmāriyyūn* (الكماريون) which

¹ SA p. ix. Mani points out that he was living amongst the “Sabaioi” which is clearly derived from Aramaic *sobai* which means baptist (Gardner and Lieu, 2004: 65).

² The Qur'an mentioned the Ṣabians in three suras: *baqarah* no. 62, *haj* no. 15 and *ma'yadah* no. 69

ان الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ {62} البقرة

But the Arabs wrongly translated “sb” صبعة as the Arabic صبا ‘to convert’ instead of Aramaic “sb” صبعة ‘to dye’ or “submerge”. Therefore, Arabic literature still wrongly calls them “those who converted.”

³ Islamic historians referred to all pagans as “Ṣābians,” whether Babylonians, Greek, Egyptians or Romans.

⁴ المغتلسة: هؤلاء قوم كثيرون بنواحي البطائح، وهم صابئة البطائح، يقولون بالاغتسال، ويغسلون جميع ما يأكلونه، ورتبهم يعرف بالحسيح، وهو الذي شرع الملة، ويزعم ان الكونين ذكر وأنثى، وأن البقول من شرع الذكر، وأن الأكشوت من شرع الأنثى وأن الأشجار عروقه، ولهم أقاويل شنيعة تجري مجرى الخرافة، وكان تلميذه يقال له: شمعون، وكانوا يوافقون المانوية في الأصلين ويفترق ملتهم بعد، وفيهم من يعظم النجوم الى وقتنا هذا (ابن النديم، الفهرست 1994 ص 414).

was located between Wasīṭ and Basra. He also reported that the Ṣabeans were related to Ṣabi bn Miṭṣolah bn Idris or Ṣabi bn Mari at the time of Abraham⁵. Al-Nadim mentioned many baptist sects who were living in southern Iraq such as: the “Dashtim”, the “Muhājirūn”, the “Kaṣṭiūn”, the “Mughtasilah”, the “al-Hasīh” (Elchasites) and “Ṣābat al-Baṭā’ih”.⁶ Macuch asserts that the Mandaean actually settled in southern Mesopotamia and had many names. In Mesene (Maisan) especially they were called by their proper name “Mandaeans and Maṣkənaeans” and their script and dialect was called *maiṣānā’it* “Messenian” i. e. “Mandaic”.⁷

The Mandaean call themselves *bhirī zidqa* “the righteous elect” and ‘*Naṣoreans*’ (*naṣuraiyī*),⁸ i.e. “guardians” or “possessors” of secret rites and knowledge “*Naṣiruta*.”⁹ The Mandaean society, before the Moslem conquest of Iraq, consisted of two classes: (a) the priestly clan or the *Naṣoreans*; that is the inner circle of the priests and their novices, and (b) the laymen clan or the

“The Mughtasilah: These people are very numerous in the region of al-Baṭā’ih, they are [called] the *Ṣābat al-Baṭā’ih*. They observe ablution as a rite and wash everything which they eat. Their head is known as *al-Hasīh* [Elkesaites] and it is he who instituted their sect. They assert that the two existences are male and female and that the herbs are from the likeness of the male, whereas the parasite plants [*al-uksūth*] are from the likeness of the female, the trees being veins (roots). They have seven [shameful is the right translation] sayings, taking the form of fables. His [*al-Hasīh*] disciple was named *Sham’un*. They agreed with the Manicheans about two elemental [principles], but later their sect became separate. Until this our day, some of them venerate the stars.” (*The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, translated and edited by Dodge, London, 1970: 811) Lady Drower asserts that the “Elkasaites were once closely related to Naṣoraeans” (SA, p. 97).

⁵ Almas’ūi, *al-tanbih wa al-’ishārf*, Brill, Leiden, (1894) pp. 161, 90-91.

⁶ Al-Nadim, the *Fihrist*, Budge, 1970: 809 ff.

⁷ Macuch R., “The Origin of the Mandaean and their Script”, JSS, 16, 1971 pp. 147-192, esp. p. 191.

⁸ Sometimes the heavy ‘ṣ’ is written by none Mandaean as ‘z’, Nazorenes. (SA p. ix) This term was used by the Jews to designate Christians (Peters, 1972: 668).

⁹ Rudolph 1983: 343. Drower defines *Naṣiruta* as “esoteric religion within a religion, a gnosis within gnosis, and its heart is the interpretation which it attaches to sacramental acts” (SA p. xv).

Mandaeans who form the greater number of the sect.¹⁰ Although they revered John the Baptist and occasionally mention him in some prayers, their relation to him is still problematic because they consider him “teacher” or “reformer” and never the founder of their faith.¹¹ In fact there is no mention of a founder of Mandaism in all their writings.¹² After the Islamic invasion the priestly school which was teaching the esoteric principles of the “Naṣiruta” diminished gradually and could no longer fight the new elements of transformation. Eventually, the majority of the Mandaean population had to convert to Islam due to persecution and a heavy poll tax.¹³

No one can determine the first appearance of the Mandaeans in Mesopotamia, and the question of their origin is still one of the continuing mysteries of Mandaean research. After nearly two centuries, this issue still raises much controversy amongst scholars. Some, like Nöldeke, Brandt and Lidzbarski, assert a pre-Christian existence to the Mandaeans, others like Pallis prefer a late dating, i. e. 6th century C.E.¹⁴ In fact, Lidzbarski envisaged a Mandaic migration from the Transjordan towards Parthia in the first century

¹⁰ Cf. the Manichaean community which was divided into an inner circle of the elect (‘the virginal’) and the greater number of hearers or catechumens (‘the continent’) (Gardner and Lieu, 2004: 23). Shaked stated, “Mandaean doctrine was restricted to people deemed to possess a higher type of piety just as in Manichaeism and Mazdakite movement” (Shaked, 1994: 75).

¹¹ Yamauchi, 1970: 80 ff.

¹² In this respect Drower comments, “For the Mandaeans there was no founder to reverence, no great prophet to single out as leader, no human saint upon whom to pinpoint devotion.” (Drower, “Mandaean Polemic”, BSOAS, Vol. 25, (1962), pp. 438-448, esp. p. 438).

¹³ Brandt writes: “The disintegration of the community after the Islamic invasion led, by means of the compilation of the divergent tractates and traditions, to the present-day disorder in the Mandaean religion. The “little college” of priests was dispersed throughout Mesopotamia and could no longer overcome the disunion” (Brandt, 1889: 58 cited by Rudolph, HR, vol. 8, 1969: 212).

¹⁴ Pallis believes that all Jewish names and ideas mentioned in the Mandaean writings are derived from Islam (Pallis, 1926: 118).

From the home of the great community therein, I became the healer for souls! I became a healer for souls who heals but takes no fee. I set forth, came and reached the gates of Babylon. Of the children of Babylon there were some who shut their doors on seeing me: There were some who shut their doors. And there were those who opened their doors. Those who shut their doors hated Life and loved death and will be held back in the Abode of Darkness. Those who opened their doors loved Life and hated Death, they hated Death and loved Life. They will rise up in purity and will behold the Place of Light.²²

It seems that the Naṣōraeans flourished in Babylonia under the Parthian kingdom and dwelt, like the other Baptist and Gnostic sects (e.g. Elchsaïtes and Manicheans) in central and southern Babylonia in towns such as Kutha, Borsippa, Nippur²³ and Purat-Maysan.²⁴ As soon as they settled down they got acquainted with the magic and astrology of the Chaldeans and the astrology of the Babylonians.²⁵ Hence, they became the soothsayers and “masters” of incantations in Mesopotamia, from whence originated “the most

²² CP pp. 142-43 (hymn No. 164). Drower's translation, text attested:

[illegible]

²³ Müller-Kessler Ch., ARAM, 2004: 53.

²⁴ Forat-Mišan is situated in the neighborhood of Basra, the ancient dwelling place of the Mandadaeans. Brandt points out that the Perate branch of the Ophite gnosis was founded by Εὐφράτης or Περαιτιχός, whom the "Perates" obtained their name (Brandt, 1889: 192). According to Lidzbarski, some Characenian coins were written in the Mandaic script. (Naveh, "The Origin of the Mandaic Script", BASOR, 1970: 33). Jewish communities also flourished under the tolerant rule of the Achaemenids and Arsacids (SA, p. 99).

²⁵ See *Sfar Malwašia* "The Mandaean Book of the Zodiac", translated by Drower, London (1949).

interesting magic formulas in Eastern Aramaic.”²⁶ The Sasanians brought their flourishing to an end when the Zoroastrian state under Shapur I (241-272) began the persecution of “foreign” religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Manichaeism and Gnosticism, and ordered the destruction of many Mandaean temples.²⁷ Kardir (late 3rd century C.E.),²⁸ tells us in his inscription at *naqsh-i-Rustam* how he initiated a religious persecution of great severity throughout the Persian Empire against the other religions such as Manicheans, Jews, *kristyānē* Christians, *nāṣorāyē* Naṣoreans etc.²⁹ This inscription can be taken as a solid evidence of the existence of the Mandaeans in Mesopotamia, along with other Baptist/Gnostic sects at that time in Sasanian Iraq. In this respect Quispel writes: “The Mandaean problem has become an open question again since Torgny Säve Söderbergh has shown that the Manichaean *Psalms of Thomas* were based upon extant Mandaean hymns, thus proving that the Mandaean sect in Iraq must had a very long prehistory.”³⁰

In the sixteenth century, the Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran came to the attention of the Western world through the Jesuit missionaries, who

²⁶ Müller-Kessler Ch., ARAM, Vol. 11 & 12, 1999-2000: 296. Theodore bar Khoni says, “The *Dostai* are called in Maisan Mandaeans, in Beth-Armaia Naṣōraeans (*Naṣrāiā*). (Cited by Eisler, 1931: 616, from: Pognon, *Inscr. Mandaites*, p. 224 sq. ; W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, p. 383; E. Peterson, *Z.N.T.W.*, xxvii. 1928: 65 n. 2, 95 n. 7).

²⁷ Rudolph, 1983: 364.

²⁸ Kartir is *Moabadan-Moabad* “the high priest” of the Magians who flourished under Shapur I, Hormizd I, Bahrām I, II, and III (Zaehner, 1955: 23-25).

²⁹ Zaehner, 1955: 24. Widengren, 1961: 16-17. Shaked, 1994: 11 and n. 15.

³⁰ He continues: “The curious expression “Lord of Greatness” in Mandaean writings has been found in the Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon*. Moreover, I cannot explain the parallels between the names of Mandaean divinities and those found in certain Hellenistic magical papyri unless the Mandaeans have very old Western roots”, “Gnosticism and the New Testament”, *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 19, 1965: 79.

accompanied the Portuguese armada in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, and came into contact with the Mandaeans in and about Basra and in Khuzistan.³¹ The Jesuits thought that they discovered the “heretical Christians of St. John,” but to the disappointment of the monks they could not convince the Mandaeans, except for a few, to join the Christian faith. But they succeeded in recruiting some of them as mercenaries and interpreters who sailed with the Portuguese fleet to the Strait of Hormuz, Masqat, Goa, Ceylon and even to Portugal itself.³² When the Portuguese witnessed the persecution of the Mandaeans at the hands of the Moslems,³³ the Portuguese reached an agreement with the Pasha of Basra to move the Mandaeans to the Christian lands, but the Pasha went back on his word and did not allow the Mandaeans to leave and the exodus came to a halt.³⁴

Conclusion:

According to the Mandaean manuscript “Haran Gawaita”³⁵ and other historical records, distinguished Semitic scholars, such as Lidsbarski, contented that Mandaeism (literature and cult) is influenced strongly by the Old Testament and can only have originated in Jewish circles.³⁶ We might,

³¹ Kraeling, 1929: 195.

³² Lupieri, 2002: 83 ff.

³³ In 1637 all the Jews and Mandaeans of Persia were forced to convert to Islam (Lupieri, 2002: 104).

³⁴ Lupieri, 2002: 105.

³⁵ Lady Drower is certain that: “Haran Gawaita” is an important manuscript and might contribute to the solution of the problem of the origin of the Mandaeans (See Drower “Haran Gawaita” (1953) p. viii).

³⁶ Lidzbarski, 1915: xvi where he writes: “*Ihre Terminologie in Lehre und Kultus ist so stark durch das Alte Testament und das Hebräische beeinflusst, wie man es sonst ausserhalb des Judentums findet*”. See also his similar views in *Mandäische Liturgien* 1920: xix and in *Ginza*, 1925: vi. Later, Lady Drower adopted the theory of a western origin of the Mandaeans in heretical Jewish circles: “early Naṣiruta, or *Ur-Mandäismus* to use the convenient German

therefore, conclude that the Naṣōraeans were either a heterodox Jewish sect or the followers of John the Baptist, who did not convert to Christianity, and they fled to the east before the fall of Jerusalem in C.E. 70 because they were persecuted by the Jews.³⁷ Having first settled in northern Mesopotamia (Haran),³⁸ they moved to the Median hills of old Parthia and finally settled in Babylon and southern Mesopotamia, where they still live. This migration might explain the cultural influences of Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and the old Babylonian religion on the Mandaean writings.

§ 1.2 - The Mandaean System:

The Mandaeans believe in two universes: (i) An intangible universe which is beyond our perception, and consists of two worlds: the World of Light and the World of Darkness. (ii) The world of *mšūni kuṣṭa*³⁹ and the tangible world of Tibil (earth). According to their belief, the *Mana Rba* “the Great Mana” (Intelligence), who dominates the World of Light, issued *Hiia Qadmiia* “the First Life” from the great *yardina* “Jordan” of Life. In turn, the First Life submitted a request to himself and created a son of his own whom he called *Hiia Taniania* “the Second Life” or “Yōšamin”. The Second Life became

expression, was originally a sect which flourished in Judaea and Samaria then possibly in Parthian-Jewish settlements and in Transjordan, and that it was a hybrid strongly influenced by Magianism and Jewish Gnosticism” (Drower, “Mandaean Polemic”, BSOAS, (1962) p. 448).

³⁷ The Mandaeans always define themselves as the followers of John the Baptist (*Yahia Yuhana*) in Jerusalem (SA, p. vi). According to Josephus, John the Baptist had “an astonishingly persuasive power over the Jewish populace” (Mead, 1924: 4).

³⁸ For the Mandaean polemic toward Christians, see Drower “Mandaean Polemic”, BSOAS, (1962) pp. 438-48, esp. pp. 439-440, which might allude to their reason for moving from Haran.

³⁹ *mšūni kuṣṭa* : the world of ideal counterparts. “It is a world of ideas, in which is found in the double, the counterpart of everything in the material world” (See Drower, *The Secret Adam*, 1960: 39 ff.).

infatuated with the idea of creating a world of his own. He, therefore, transferred his defecting tendency to his son Abatur “the Third Life”. Abatur opened the gate of the World of Light, and as soon he gazed into the abyss (or: darkness) Ptahil “the Fourth Life”, came into being. Ptahil, who received a mandate from his father Abatur, descended to the black waters, consolidated *arqa* “the earth” and created the material world. On the other hand, the Lord of Darkness created a kingdom for himself with demonic beings of monsters, dragons, evil spirits and most of all the “Seven” (planets), and the “Twelve” (signs of the Zodiac) and their mother, the goddess of Darkness “Rūha”. As a counter move, the World of Light created *Manda d-Hiia* “Gnosis of Life”⁴⁰ in order to put an end to the defection of the *uthras* “beings of the World of Light” and to conquer the evil forces of the World of Darkness.

Ptahil, with the assistance of Rūha and her entourage, tried to create Adam but they could not succeed to make him stand on his feet. Therefore, Ptahil went back to the World of Light and brought from his father the *nišimta* “soul” and cast it into Adam’s body. Only then Adam stood on his feet and became aware of his existence. The core of the Mandaean’s soteriology is the deliverance of the *nišimta* “soul” from the perishable body. When death occurs the soul leaves the body and begins a long journey through the *maṭaratia* “watch-houses” or “purgatories” before reaching its final destination; *alma d-nhura* “the World of Light”.

⁴⁰ *Manda d-Hiia*: Gnosis of Life and the Mandaean Redeemer (See below §2.3.2).

There are minor resemblances between the Mandaean story of creation and the Babylonian one such as the creation of the savior and his fight against the forces of evil. These resemblances led scholars, such as Brandt, to believe that Mandaism is an off-shoot of the late Babylonian religion; he even assumed that Mandaism was the centre from which the Ophite ⁴¹ and similar Gnostic system issued. ⁴² Lady Drower dedicated the introduction of her book “Secret Adam” to the Naṣōraeans and their exodus from Palestine, which she dates to just after the destruction of the 2nd temple. She also discusses their possible relationship with Jewish-Palestinian groups.⁴³

§ 1.3 - Mandaism and Gnosticism:

In addition to the resemblances between Mandaism and the Babylonian religion, we find striking parallels between the Mandaic Gnostic motifs and the motifs of the other Gnostic sects such as the Hermetists and the Valentinians especially in the area of the redeemer and the ascent of the soul.⁴⁴ Gnosticism, the most problematic of cults, is first clearly attested in the second century C.E., but its exact origin is still of great controversy among scholars.⁴⁵ It gathered momentum in the following century and spread to

⁴¹ A Gnostic sect flourished in north Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt during the first century (Wilson, 1958: 177ff).

⁴² Pallis, 1926: 151.

⁴³ Drower, SA, p. xiv.

⁴⁴ Jonas writes, “The celestial journey of the returning soul is indeed one of the most constant common features in otherwise widely divergent systems, and its significance for the gnostic mind is enhanced by the fact that it represents a belief not only essential in gnostic theory and expectation, and expressive of the conception of man’s relation to the world, but of immediate practical importance to the Gnostic believer, since the meaning of *gnosis* is to prepare for this final event, and all its ethical, ritual, and technical instruction is meant to secure its successful completion” (Jonas 1958: 165).

⁴⁵ Godwin, J., 1981: 84. Rudolph points out that “The beginning and end of Gnosis in late antiquity cannot be pin-pointed exactly. It makes appearance at the beginning of the Christian

Egypt and to the Fertile Crescent.⁴⁶ Some contemporary scholars, such as Quispel, believe that Gnosticism is neither the product of the Greek philosophy nor “a fossilized survival of old Iranian or even Indian religious concept.”⁴⁷

According to the Mandaean manuscript *Haran Gawaita* Mandaism “Naşoraeism” struck roots in Mesopotamia when a tendency to relegate the gods of the old religions and to adopt the Persian dualism at the dawn of the first millennium when the country was under the Parthian-Sasanian dominion.⁴⁸ Mandaism and other baptist gnostic-type movements must have been around much at that time.⁴⁹ Some hypotheses say that the Naşoreans, who settled in East Jordan, became under the persecution of both the Jews and Christians, and for that reason they sought refuge in a friendlier atmosphere of Parthia and Media hills and from there they moved down to Babylon and southern Mesopotamia.⁵⁰ Naşoreism preserved the old Gnostic tenet that the world is created by foolish creator or demiurge, who himself came into being as a result of an error and that the soul is a “spark” from the World of Light has to be redeemed and sent back to its origin, along

era and disappears again at the latest in the 6th century, as far as the western manifestations are concerned” (Rudolph, 1983: 367).

⁴⁶ Jonas, 1958: 91. For more about different Gnostic sects in Mesopotamia see Morony, 1984: 408 ff.

⁴⁷ Quispel, “Gnosticism and the New Testament”, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 1965: 73. Quispel also noted: “It is rather a religion of its own, with its own phenomenological structure, characterized by the mythical expression of Self-experience through the revelation of the Word, or in other words, by an awareness of a tragic split within the Deity itself” (Ibid).

⁴⁸ Haran Gawaita tells that the Naşoreans (Mandaeans) migrated from Jerusalem under the Parthian king Artabanus III (?). (see Drower, *Haran Gawaita*, 1953: 3, n. 3).

⁴⁹ Shaked, 1994: 11.

⁵⁰ SA, p. xi.

sect, one among many. (2) The Mandaeans then accepted a Gnostic view. (3) This gnosis was finally institutionalized.⁵⁸

We may outline the main parallel and different features of the Mandaean Gnostic system and the general Gnostic system according to the following table:

§ 1.3.1 - General Parallels and Differences between Gnosticism and Mandaeanism:

<u>Gnosticism</u>	<u>Mandaeanism</u>
1. The Gnostic system is based upon the dualistic opposition between the transcendental world of the “fullness” (<i>pleroma</i>) embracing the High God and the Aeons, his inferior emanations, on the one hand, and, on the other, the “emptiness” (<i>kenoma</i>), the planetary and terrestrial world inhabited by man.	1. The Gnostic system of the Mandaeans is based upon the opposition between the transcendental (<i>nukraia</i>) world of Light embracing <i>hiia rbia qadmaia</i> “the First Great Life” (or: the King of Light) and the <i>uthras</i> , his inferior emanations, on the one hand, and, on the other, the world of Darkness, the Seven planets (<i>šibiahia</i>) and terrestrial world (<i>tibil</i>) inhabited by man.
2. The <i>kenoma</i> came about because of some crisis in the <i>pleroma</i> , whereby the lowest of the Aeons on the emanation scale, a female figure	2. The physical world came about because of the crises caused by the Second Life “Yōšamin” and his sons the <i>uthras</i> when they decided to create a

⁵⁸ Quoted from Yamauchi, 1973: 122.

<p>known variously as Wisdom (Sophia) or Thought (<i>Enonoia</i>) lapsed out of the <i>pleroma</i>, and in her confusion and dissatisfaction, she produced the angel archons, generally seven in number, who created and then ruled the world.</p>	<p>world of their own without consulting the higher deity, the First Life. Abatur (the Third Life) lapsed out of the world of Light, and in his confusion and dissatisfaction, produced Ptahil (the Fourth Life). Ptahil created the world with the help of Rūha and her sons the Seven planets who ruled the world.</p>
<p>3. The spark or spirit (<i>pneuma</i>) of the divine <i>pleroma</i> which fell into man must be regained and restored to its rightful place on high.</p>	<p>3. The soul <i>nišimta</i> or <i>mana</i> which fell into man must be regained and restored to its rightful place; the World of Light.</p>
<p>4. An Aeon (Jesus) is sent down to redeem the innermost part of every man's <i>pneuma</i> through suffering.</p>	<p>4. The messenger <i>Manda d-Hiia</i> (Gnosis of Life) or Enosh-Uthra is sent down to lead the <i>nišimta</i> (soul) to its final destination through <i>gnosis</i> "knowledge" and "awakening."</p>
<p>5. Gnosticism is optimistic towards the destiny of man and pessimistic towards the universe.⁵⁹</p>	<p>5. Mandaeanism is optimistic towards the destiny of the <i>nišimta</i> (soul) of man and pessimistic towards the physical world "Tibil".</p>

⁵⁹ Extracts from Peters, 1972: 648 ff.

§ 1.4 - The Main Characteristic Rituals of the Mandaean:

“The great importance which the Mandaean attribute to their cult practices shows their special character even more clearly. It is not “knowledge” alone that redeems but the cultic rites, primarily baptism and the “mass for the dead”, are necessary for salvation.”⁶⁰

§ 1.4.1 - ܡܫܒܘܬܐ *Mašbuta* (Baptism)

The central cultic rite of the Mandaean is baptism or “immersion” ܡܫܒܘܬܐ (*mašbuta*, pronounced *mašwatta*). It is the immersion in the fluid of Life which gives the promise of eternal life to the *nišimta* “soul”.⁶¹ The rite of baptism had the esoteric significance of an initiation into the mystery of gnosis. To the Mandaean water is the medium which most fully expresses the mystery of being, or of the Being which is semi personified as the ‘Great Life’, and a river is the equivalent of the heavenly ‘Jordan’ flowing in the world of light:⁶² Thus ܡܝܐ *mia* “water” originates in (Life) and conversely ܚܝܐ *hiia* “Life” originates in water. By performing baptism in the *yardina* “river” the Mandaean enters a into *laupa* “union” with the World of Light. Thus, the

⁶⁰ Rudolf, 1983: 360. He continues: “From this it may be deduced that here the gnostic ideology was amalgamated with that of an older cultic community, a heretical Jewish baptismal sect as is suggested by the water rites, and that thus an original Mandaean-Nasorean system came into existence, probably already in pre-Christian times.”

⁶¹ MII, p. 100.

⁶² Drower, *Water into Wine*, 1956: 229.

Mandaean is protected from the powers of death, purified from pollution and defilement and also receives forgiveness for his transgression.⁶³

In addition to the immersion in the running water, the full baptism includes the sacrament of oil, bread, and water, the hand-grasp and kiss called 'giving *kušṭa*'⁶⁴ and the final blessing by laying the right hand of the priest on the head of the baptized person. Besides the full baptism there are two lesser water rites which are performed without priestly assistance:

1. *rišama*: prayers recited daily, with covered head, just before sunrise; after evacuation of the bowels. At this stage no priest is needed.
2. *ṭamaša*: the second ablution is a triple complete immersion in the river, also performed without ministration of a priest. It must be performed immediately after any kind of pollution (coition, nocturnal pollution, touching an unclean person) and after any serious defilement such as touching the body of a dead person. It must be also performed by a woman after menstruation and after child birth.⁶⁵

Some scholars believe that certain roots of the Mandaean baptism is related to the Jewish rule such the prohibition of baptism and other rites on the Sabbath and on the *mbaṭṭal* (inauspicious) days.⁶⁶ But repeated baptism was a common feature among the different gnostic sects of Babylonia such as

⁶³ For the full details of the Mandaean baptism *maṣbuta* see Segelberg, *Maṣbūtā*, Uppsala (1958), MII p. 100 ff., Buckley, 2002: 80 ff.

⁶⁴ *kušṭa*: (a) "good faith", "rectitude", "truth", "sincerity", "right", "pact", "troth", "promise". (b) The act of placing the right hand in that of another person in token of and ratification of a pact, oath or promise. This act is concluded by a kiss, each of the two persons kissing his own right hand when the hand is released. (c) A being, a personification of truth and good faith (ATŠ, p. 12).

⁶⁵ MII, p.101.

⁶⁶ Segelberg, 1958: 176.

Bihram, as it seems, is the core of the ritual, but he does not play any significant role in the Mandaean mythology. It is obvious that Bihram is a Persian name associated with some Persian kings,⁷² and with the Persian god Bahram or Vahram.⁷³ We have no evidence, whatsoever, to prove that the Bihram mentioned at the Mandaean baptism is a human being who established the sect, as implied by some. Others, like Segelberg, hypothesized that when the Mandaens settled in the East during the Sassanian period they replaced the name of *Yohana* “John the Baptist” with Bihram in order to legitimize the new religion to the rulers of the country.⁷⁴

In addition to the main baptism, which is performed in every religious event including marriage, the Mandaean perform a minor ablution (baptism) to the dying person. After the priest performs *rišama* “the minor ablution”, the mortally ill person is dressed in his *rasta* (ritual dress), and a small myrtle wreath is inserted in the little finger of his right hand and he is watched carefully day and night so that he not die unclean. At the end of the *rišama* the priest recites some prayers, while some members of the dying person’s family bring water from the river. When death approaches, the dying person is undressed and doused three times from head to foot. They lift him and place

⁷² Bihram I, Bihram, Birhram III and Bahram IV (Zaehner, 1955: 38 ff).

⁷³ About this ambiguous figure, which is closely associated with the Mandaean baptism, Drower writes: “His name is Iranian (Avestan Vəδəθayna) and the Mandaean Bihram may be the Persian genius of victory (New Persian *Bahrām* < Middle Persian *Varhrān*) . . . The presence of the banner at Mandaean baptism may be connected with Bihram’s banner of victory” (SA p. 65). Vahram or Baharam (Verethraghna), the *yazata* “is the Persian god of the planets and victory who was created by Ahura and became the great champion against demons” (Boyce, 1975: 54, see also Zaehner, 1955: 220). Lupieri suggests that the Mandaean who lived in Characene since the second century must have chosen Bihram (the deity of Maisan) as eponymous deity of their baptism (Lupieri, 2002: 163 f.).

⁷⁴ Segelberg, 1955: 57 ff. At any account this subject needs further research.

him on clean bedding facing the North Star.⁷⁵ Then they cloth him in a new *rasta* and wait for his *nišimta* (soul) to depart his body. ⁷⁶ In the past other Gnostic sects such as the Valentinians and the Marconsians used to perform this kind of baptism for their dying people.⁷⁷

§ 1.4.2 - ܡܫܝܩܬܐ The Masiqta (Ascent of the Soul)

The Masiqta is the second major ceremony of the Mandaeans and it, too, includes immersion in “Jordan” (river, running water), anointing with oil and crowning with the myrtle wreath. It is the Naṣōraean mass dedicated to those who die “unclean” without the proper ceremony of the dead. The Mandaean has to die clean wearing his white ceremonial outfit in order to join his heavenly *dmuta* “image, counterpart”: “I go to meet my image and my image comes to me: it caresses and embraces me as if I were returning from captivity.”⁷⁸ The Mandaeans believe that a man who dies in a violent death suffers long and painful delay in the *maṭaratia* (watch-houses) before moving into the next world. Therefore, a *masiqta* “ascension” ceremony has to be performed three days after the death of the believer in order to assist *nišimta* “the soul”, by furnishing it with a new body, with which it could enter the

⁷⁵ Perhaps this is due to the old Mesopotamian influences, since the north is connected to high lands “mountains”.

⁷⁶ MII p. 178 ff.

⁷⁷ Widengren, 1946: 108.

⁷⁸ GRL, p. 136: 1. The text:

ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ ܡܫܝܩܬܐ
Cf. the “figure of light that comes to meet the dying” in the Coptic-Manichaean genealogy of gods (Jonas, 1958: 122).

World of Light.⁷⁹ For the Mandaeans the fate of the *nišimta* is the main concern, because *pagra* “the body” cannot rise to the world of Light and eventually integrates back into the earth.⁸⁰

The *masiqta* is a long ceremony, which requires the presence of, at least, three priests: a *ganzibra*⁸¹ “head-priest”, a *tarmida* “priest” and a *šganda* “assistant”. The preparations for this ceremony start on Saturdays only and the main ritual takes place on Sunday.⁸² The main ingredients of *masiqta* “ascension” are the recitation of certain prayers from the Left Ginza, and a sacramental meal. The meal includes unleaved bread,⁸³ different kind of fruit and nuts, fish, and a tiny piece of sacrificed white dove-flesh (*ba*).⁸⁴ There must be fresh myrtle and a large bowl of water just filled from the *yardina* “river”.⁸⁵ The recitations are continued at fixed intervals until the end of the forty-five days’ journey of the soul.⁸⁶ There are at least nine major variants of the Mandaean *masiqta*:

1. The *Bukra*: the first *masiqta* performed by a priest after ordination.
2. The *masiqta* of newly-consecrated *ganzabra*.
3. The *Dabahata* or *Ṭabahata*:

⁷⁹ On the third day a *masiqta* is performed for the dead and the seal of the grave is removed.

⁸⁰ Drower, 1956: 234.

⁸¹ *Ganzibra* (Paž. *Ganzubar*, Pahl. *ganğāṣar*, Mod. P. گنجور , Aram. loan-word גנזברא (ܡܢܬܠܐ) treasurer: the ecclesiastical rank above that of the *tarmida* (priest). (MD p. 77) Akk. *ganzabāru* “treasurer” (A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian, 2000: 90, see also Macuch, 196 5: 139).

⁸² Al-Sabti, *Masiqta*, 2004: 18.

⁸³ The Manicheans share two rites with the Mandaeans: the purification of their food and the ritual preparation of unleaved bread (*faiṭira*) (See Henrichs, 1973: 45).

⁸⁴ A ritual word for the dove sacrificed at the *masiqta*, and the sacred dove’s meat consumed by the priests at the same (MD, p. 44).

⁸⁵ Drower comments: “the symbolism of water, fruit, bread and fresh myrtle, are linked with the idea of fertility and life triumphant over death.” (Drower, “The Mandaean New Year Festival”, *Man*, Vo. 36 (Nov., 1936), pp. 185-188, esp. p. 188).

⁸⁶ Rudolph, 1983: 362.

celebrated in the names of a male and female, and linked with the celebration of a *Dukrana lhdaia rba zadiqa*. 4. The *masiqta* of *Shitil*: celebrated for one who dies not wearing a myrtle-wreath or otherwise improperly clad for death. 5. The *masiqta* of *Zihrun Razia Kasia*: celebrated for one who had died during of the minor *mbaṭṭal* days (inauspicious days on which all ritual is forbidden), etc. 6. The *masiqta* of Adam: for one who has died on one of the major *mbaṭṭal* days, such as New Year's Day. 7. The *masiqta* of *Samandri'il*: for a person who has died of burns, or has fallen from a tree or been drowned. 8. The *masiqta* of *kanat*: for a woman who dies during pregnancy. 9. *masiqta* of *hai-šūm*: for a person who died as a result of a snake bite. There are other *masiqta* for a bride-groom who died during wedding ceremonies and for moving the remains of a dead person.⁸⁷

While the *masiqta* is intended essentially for the dead, it is also applied to living. A *masiqta* is performed in the ceremony of initiating a new priest. The *ašualia* “novice for priesthood” dedicates a *masiqta* to his *rabi* “teacher” and pronounces his name at a certain point in the ritual where the name of officiating priest has to be indicated.

§ 1.5 - The Mandaean Calendar

The Mandaeans have a lunar year, which is divided into twelve months of thirty days each, with five intercalary days named *Parwanaiia*,⁸⁸ which fall

⁸⁷ Al-Sabti, *Masiqta*, Nijmegen (2004) pp. 13-14.

⁸⁸ The word *Parwanaiia* (*parwānāyē*) connected with the Parthian adverb *parwan*, “before or after” (Mary Boyce, “A Word-list of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian”, *Acta Iranica* 9a. (Leiden, 1977), p. 72. n. 7, see also Burtea, “Šarh d-Paranaiia”, *ARAM* Vol. 16 (2004) p. 66).

between *Sumbulta* “Virgo”, the 8th month, and *Qaina* “Libra” (Tišrin), the 9th month. The beginning of the “Panja” festival changes depending upon the movements of lunar months in the year.⁸⁹ The Mandaean calendar is a 365-day calendar consisting of twelve 30-day months, with 5 epagomenals inserted at the end of the 8th month. This compensation takes place during the *Parwanaiia* (or: *Panaja* = five days) which is celebrated by the Mandaeans during the five intercalary days between the end of the month *Šumbulta* (Ellul) and the beginning of *Qaina* (Tišrin).⁹⁰

During the five days preceding, no religious ceremony except a funeral may be performed, and no undertaking of importance should be begun, for these are considered to be “days of darkness”.⁹¹ They are followed by the five intercalary days mentioned above, called “days of light”. Mandaeans are forbidden to pray after sunset at other times of the year, but during the nights of *Parwanaiia* darkness is considered non-existent, and praise and prayer flow continually. Barriers between this world and the world of Light are down.

The Mandaeans believe that in the five days of the *Parwanaiia* (Panja) five celestial beings of Light were created, and that consequently the doors of the world of Light are open during these five days. The beings of light are:

⁸⁹ The term Panja means the five *Gatha* days, also called *Khamsat al-mustariqat*, was used in the Persian as well as in the Sistanian calendars during the 5th century (See Taqizadeh, “The Old Iranian Calendar again”, BSOAS, Vol. 14, No. 3, (1952), pp. 603-611, esp. p. 608).

⁹⁰ The old Iranian calendar (of 12 months of 30 days and 5 supplementary days) are still in use in many districts of Kashan, Natanz, Maima, Javshagan, and the in the province of Yazd. (Ibid, 610).

⁹¹ The Mandaeans think the five days preceding intercalary days particularly ominous, because they are dedicated to the evil spirits of death and darkness.

Marad-Rabuta, Manda d-Hiia, Šišlam-Rba, Adam-Shaq and Hibil-Ziwa.⁹² Although this calendar could have been borrowed from the Zoroastrians at any time in the early Middle Ages, further characteristics of the Mandaean calendar suggest earlier origins that would pre-date the Middle Ages, the Sassanians, and even Mandaeism itself. The twelve months of the Mandaean year grouped and named according to four seasons (e.g. the first month of the year is called *awal sitwa*, “first of the winter”) but also bear Babylonian (Aramaic) names of months. The month Nisan designates the 3rd month of the year, exactly as in the Sogdian calendar, but incongruously since Nisanu is the 1st month of the Babylonian year.

The twelve months of the Mandaean year are divided into four seasonal divisions: *Sitwa* (winter), *Abhar* (spring), *Giṭa* (summer), and *Paiz* (autumn). The months are also named according to the signs of the Zodiac: *Daula* “Aquarius” (Šabat), *Nuna* “Pisces” (Adar), *Ambra* “Aries” (Nisan), *Taura* “Taurus” (Ayar), *Šilmia* “Gemini” (Siwan), *Širṭana* “Cancer” (Tammuz), *Arya* “Leo” (Ab) *Šumbulta* “Virgo” (Ellul), *Qaina* “Libra” (Tišrin), *Arqba* “Scorpio” (Mašrwan), *Haṭia* “Sagittarius” (Kanun), *Gadia* “Capricorn” (Ṭabit). Each year is named after the day which it began, e.g. the Year of Habšaba, the Year of Sunday; or Year of Rahaṭia, Year of Friday. The Mandaean New Year is called *Dihba Rba*.⁹³ The Mandaeans count the 24 hours of a day and night as beginning at dawn, i.e. Tuesday is followed by Tuesday night: “the night of Tuesday” to an Arab, on the contrary, means the night *preceding* Tuesday.

⁹² ATŠ, pp. 116-7. Hibil-Ziwa: a messenger of the World of Light and the son of Manda d-Hiia.

⁹³ See MII, pp. 84-5.

The Mandaean calendar has the additional incongruity of beginning the year with the winter season, whereas the Persian-Zoroastrian New Year is normally associated with the spring. The Persian-Zoroastrian New Year coincided with early winter in the 1st century B.C.E., so the essential names of Mandaean months may have been instituted in this period.⁹⁴ The Mandaeans are the only non-Iranian people who adopted the old Iranian calendar, along with quite a number of other beliefs, of the later Sasanian period i.e., the time of Khosrau the Great (sixth century) without the slightest change.⁹⁵ But the Mandaeans did not use the Persian names of the months and kept the Semitic ones, as mentioned above.

The main purpose of the Mandaean calendar is to determine the ominous and auspicious times. The Mandaeans believe in two kinds of ominous (*mbaṭṭal*) days: (1) Minor *mbaṭṭal* "ominous": on these days the Mandaeans are not allowed to slaughter animals, but are allowed to eat meat of slaughtered animals on the day before. (2) Major *mbaṭṭal* "ominous": Slaughter of animals or eating meat is not allowed during these days; only vegetarian food.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ This information is courtesy of Dr. S. Stern (oral communication).

⁹⁵ Taqizadeh, BSOS, Vol. 9, 1938: 605-7. The Mandaeans still call the New Year's Day (*dahba rba*) by the Persian name *Naurūz Rba*. He also writes: "There is, however, one small people (he means the Mandaeans) with whom not only the old Iranian system of time reckoning survives, but whose national calendar is now, strictly speaking, the only true continuance of that once very widely used Mazdayasnian or Young-Avestan calendar" (Ibid, p. 605).

⁹⁶ *ḥnani* ܚܢܢܝܐ book of the Mandaeans p. 163.

§1.6 - Mandaean Feasts

§1.6.1 - ܦܪܝܬܐ Parwanaiia (Panja)

As mentioned above, the most important of the Mandaean's feasts is the *Parwanaiia*⁹⁷ (or: Panja) which is celebrated during the five intercalary days between the end of the month *Šumbulta* (Ellul) and the beginning of *Qaina* (Tišrin). Five days before the Panja, or the last five days of *Šumbulta*, are considered major *mbaṭṭl* (ominous days), for they are dedicated to the five lords of Darkness, but the period Panja is the happiest time of the whole year. As noted above, the Mandaean year is divided into twelve months of thirty days each and a month with five intercalary days. These five days are called *Parwanaiia* and the Mandaeans believe that in the five days of the *Parwanaiia* (Panja) five celestial beings of Light were created, and that consequently the doors of the world of Light are open during these five days. Those ܢܦܩܐ *nfaqa* “out of the body” (dead), are with their loved ones and share in communion (*laufa*) with them ritual meals eaten in their names. The five days of the *Parwanaiia* are called *hamša iuma dparuaniiia dḥinun dukrana* “the five days commemoration”.⁹⁸ The perfected souls of ancestors and spirits of life and light have special powers at this time to help the living. Should a person have the food fortune to die during the sacred five days, he or she will pass quickly through the purgatories (or: watch-houses) to the world of light. On the last day of the feast, special ceremonies are performed by the

⁹⁷ ܦܪܝܬܐ *pārwanāyē* is connected with modern Persian adverb ڤرستان *parstadan* and the Parthian ڤرزان *parwan* “forward, before” (Burtea, “Šarh d-Paruaniiia”, ARAM, Vol. 16, 2004: 86).

⁹⁸ ܫܡܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܢܘܢ ܕܠܟܪܢܐ ܕܠܚܡܫܐ ܝܘܡܐ ܕܦܪܝܬܐ ܕܥܣܪܝܢ ܕܝܠܕܝܢ ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܠܝܬܐ

priests for those who, during the past year, died in a state of impurity, or not wearing ritual garment. Sheep are slaughtered for lay feasting and charity, and a small piece of sheep's fat is placed on *zidqa brika* (Holy Oblation) tables. Every man, woman and child should be baptized and all share in sacraments which commemorate the dead.⁹⁹

§1.6. 2 - ديهبا ربا Dihba Rba

Dihba Rba is the Mandaeans' New Year festival, celebrated at the beginning of *Daula* (Šabat), the first month of the Mandaean year. They also use the Persian name *Nauruz Rba* for this festival. New Year's Eve is called *Kanši uZahli* "cleaning and lustration". On this day sheep and chicken are slaughtered, bread is baked and kept in the house, jars and pots are filled with water enough for thirty-six hours. All day, till sunset (*paina d-Dahba Rba*), the priests baptize the faithful. Thirty-six hours before the second day of *Daula* (Šabat), i.e. the night before the New Year and the first of the New Year, is called the Day-of-Lacking, during which period priests and laymen retire into the house, where they must remain without going outside, no matter for what purpose, and no religious ceremony can take place. The reason given for these precautions against pollution is this: For the Mandaeans, the New Year honors Mana Rba Kabira and how he completed his work of Creation. On this day, the spirits of light gather together to embark on a twelve hour journey to visit the Great Mana and show their appreciation towards him. Abatur closes

⁹⁹ Drower, *Water into Wine*, 1956: 37-8.

his door, Nidbai and Šilmai forsake their posts as the guardians of running waters; Hibil, Šitil, and Anuš depart; the dwellers in *Mšunia Kušta* (the parallel pure world) with Adam Kasia (Secret Adam) at their head and their guardian spirit Šišlam Rba (the *dmuta* of Hibil-Ziwa) all rise into the infinite worlds of light. They travel by the “vehicles of Light” and this celestial journey takes them twelve hours. They reach the realm of Light at the dawn of the New Year and spend the next twelve hours praying and praising the Great Ones. Their journey back covers the next night.

While the guardians are gone, the world is left defenseless and all sources of nature, including trees and rivers, become exposed to the forces of evil and death. Therefore, the Mandaeans take extra measures to protect themselves from pollution by staying at home praying and meditating for thirty-six hours. On the third day of the feast (the second day of the new year) the invisible guardians having returned, the vigil is over and there is a general jubilation. The Mandaeans gather in the *mandi* “temple” to greet the *ganzibra* “high-priest”, and listen to his portents for the year. Then they go to visit Mandaean families that have recently lost a loved one to console them and assure them that they are not alone in times of difficulty. Once this is done, they feast and make merry.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ For more details on this feast see Drower, 1956: 34 ff.

§1.6.3 - (ܕܝܗܒܐ ܕܫܝܠܐܡ ܪܒܐ) The Dihba d- Šišlam Rba or the Dihba d-Šušian

The Mandaean also call this feast *Nauruz Zūṭa* (Little New Year) which takes place on the 6th day and the 7th of the first month. The night between these two days is called “the night of power”¹⁰¹ and then, if a man is pious, the gate of Abatur is opened for him in a vision and he obtains whatever he may ask. However, if he is really pious he does not ask worldly favours but freedom from sin and spiritual gifts, and the result is not immediately seen. The priests visit the Mandaean families and hang on the door of every house a wreath of willow and myrtle, which remains there till the next year and is thought to protect the Mandaean from evil. In return, the Mandaean donate a small fee to the priests.

§1.6.4 - (ܕܝܗܒܐ ܗܢܝܢܐ) The Dihba Hnina or Dihba Ṭurma (the little feast)

This feast takes place on the 18th of Taura (Ayar) and lasts for three days. Baptism should take place and the dead be remembered by *lofani* or ritual meals. Dihba Hnina celebrates the return of Hibil-Ziwa from the underworlds to the worlds of light. It is a cheerful feast and commemorates creation. Hibil-Ziwa’s marriage to Zahariel (the female spirit of the underworld) results in the birth of Ptahil (the demiurge who created the

¹⁰¹ The Moslems celebrate a similar occasion on the night of the 27th of the fasting month “*Ramadan*” which they call *lailat elqadr* “the Night of Power”. They believe the gate of heavens open in this night and some of the believers’ wishes come true.

cosmos). On the first day of this feast they visit each other and have a special breakfast together which consists of rice, yogurt and dates.

§ 1.7 - ܠܘܬܬܐ ܘܩܝܪܝܬܐ *lutata uqiriata* Curses and Incantations

A large number of Mandaic magic bowls, lead and gold amulets were found in Mesopotamia during the 19th and 20th century, and have reached the Western world through archeologists and antique dealers. We cannot determine a dating for this magic material but most scholars believe that they belong to period between the 2nd and the 6th century C.E. The writings on the terracotta magic bowls survived because they were written with a special kind of “permanent” ink. The ink *diuta* ܕܝܬܐ is made, according to a secret recipe, by the scribes themselves, who are often the priests.¹⁰² To the Mandaeans writing is a sacred art and the letters of the alphabet represent the powers of life and of light. Hence, Mandaeans look upon their alphabet as magical and sacred. Writing is under the special protection of the planet Nabû¹⁰³. Letters of the alphabet, inscribed on twenty-four scraps of silver or gold, are placed

¹⁰² The following recipe was given to Drower by a Mandaean priest during her stay in Iraq: “Mix glue with river water, let it melt, and then evaporated for six days. On the seventh, pound it with powder charcoal in the portion of one *mithqal* (nearly 4.8 gm) of charcoal to 25 glue, for four or five days. Mix with water to a smooth paste, and after evaporation it will form crystals. These, mixed with river-water (*yardina*) to form ink. The *Asut Malka* (a prayer recited before all baptisms and ritual meals, and rites) should be read over it” (MII p. 23).

¹⁰³ Nbû or ‘Nbû in Mandaean (Babylonian *Nabû* ‘Mercury’). The Mandaeans, like the Babylonians, consider him as the patron of writing and the god of wisdom (MD, p. 287, see also Dally, 1989: 325).

under the pillow of a person who desires heavenly guidance in some matter of difficulty.¹⁰⁴

The bowls contain valuable information of mythical tales of Late Antiquity including early forms of liturgy, mystical literature and Mandaean textual material.¹⁰⁵ They also reflect the Mandaean belief and creed.¹⁰⁶ The purpose of these magic bowls and rolls is to throw a protective spell against enemies, capture demons, and repulse curses and avert evil eye, over the clients for whom they were written. Incantations were of various kinds and shapes; some were for health and others as love talismans.¹⁰⁷ The Mandaeans possessed a large collection of charms and magical prescriptions, and when written down they formed a real “Book of Magic”. The most famous “magic” book is *Asfar Mahwāšā* (Book of the Zodiac) which deals with a system of astrology based on the Signs of the Zodiac based on astrological literature of the Babylonians.¹⁰⁸

The magic roll is of two kinds. The larger is not easily carried on the person. It is usually called a *qmaha* ܩܡܗܐ. The smaller, for which the word *zrazta* ܙܪܙܬܐ is usual though not invariable, is written minutely on a long strip of paper from 2 – 3 inches wide, tightly rolled and inserted into a small gold or silver case so that it may be suspended round the neck from a string or chain. The astrological name of the person for whose protection the roll has

¹⁰⁴ MII, p. 240.

¹⁰⁵ Levene D., 2002: 7.

¹⁰⁶ Segal, 2000: 25.

¹⁰⁷ E. S. Drower, *A Mandaean Book of Black Magic*, JRAS (1941) p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ Budge, 1930: 241.

been written recurs throughout together with invocations of the powers of light and life for himself, his family, his possessions, and his trade.¹⁰⁹

The Mandaean religion, like the Babylonian, lived lives of fear because they believed in the existence of myriads of fiends and devils which caused sickness and death to themselves and damage to their material property.¹¹⁰ The phantoms of ghosts of dead men were greatly feared in Babylonia, even more so than among the Mandaeans. It was necessary for the living to offer food, perform rituals, and recite incantations in order to propitiate potentially vengeful ghosts, who were as often as not their relatives.¹¹¹ The people clung to the use of amulets and the art of incantations thrived in Mesopotamia. The Mandaeans became the masters of this art, and the originators of the most interesting magic formulas in Eastern Aramaic.¹¹²

The official Mandaean religion condemns the worship of the old Babylonian planetary deities, even though popular magic has seen fit to invoke their aid. The Seven (planets) and the Twelve (signs of the Zodiac), mentioned in many of the holy writings, may be treated as allies and friends. *Pašra d-Šambra* (a love charm) addressed to Libat (Dilbat, Ištar) which begins frankly, "In the name of Libat, mistress of gods and men". Antagonistic references to the planets and signs of the Zodiac also appear, sometimes in same

¹⁰⁹ MII, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ Budge, 1930: 241.

¹¹¹ Yamauchi, 1967:27. "The Mandaic charms are closest in spirit to the old Babylonian magical literature" (Montgomery, 1913: 116).

¹¹² Müller-Kessler Ch., "Phraseology in Mandaic Incantations", *Aram* Vol. 11 & 12 (1999-2000) p.296. Montgomery writes "The Mandaic dialect is fully formed and has exercised its influence, at least in spelling, upon the other two, the rabbinic and Syriac" (Montgomery, 1913: 104).

phylactery.¹¹³ The planets are considered little better than demons since actions swayed by emotion are harmful to the soul, and fault committed under planetary influence must be expiated after death in the *maṭarata* (s. *maṭarta*), realms equivalent to purgatories. The Mandaean view is that after death the soul has to pass through a number of posts of stations, *maṭarata*, before it reaches the scales of judgement. *Maṭarata* serve as places of purification for the soul proceeding towards the Realm of Light, and each is in charge of a keeper or keepers.¹¹⁴

Many of the divine figures and demons are mentioned in the *Ginza* are invoked in the Mandaean incantations and amulets, such as: *šē* 'the Life', *manda ḡ-hiia* 'the gnosis of Life', *Hibil*, *Yawar*, "the (Seven) Planets", *Yōšamin*, *Ptahil*, Gabriel, *Šamiš*, *Kiwan* "Bel" *Nabu* or *Nbu* "Nirig" or "Nergal" *Lilith*, *Dewis* "Idol-spirits" *Rūha* "Stira" (*Ištar*) "Venus-Libat" *Adonai* etc. These names and more are also found in the other chapters of the *Ginza* and in the other Mandaean texts.

In 1905 Mark Lidzbarski published a lead amulet which he dated about 400 C.E. It is considered the earliest of all Mandaic writings. The writing was inscribed with a nail, and the letters are very small.¹¹⁵ The scroll would be rolled up and worn in a container. Lady Drower believes that the lead strip was

¹¹³ MII, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ McCullough, 1967: 17.

¹¹⁵ Yamauchi, 1967: 6.

name . . .” the text ends with the typical Mandaean doxology: ܡܠܝܚܐ ܐܝܬܝܢ “And Life is Victorious”. Almost every incantation and amulet begins with the opening phrases: ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܗܝܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ “In the name of the Great Life”, ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ “May there be health, armament and sealing”, ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ “Averted and driven away are the curses”; ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܠܝܚܐ “Repulsed are all the curses and incantations”

Analyzing the Mandaean texts, one can find that the demonized Mesopotamian deities, which are also mentioned in the later Mandaic text corpus, prove without doubt that they were borrowed from a Late Parthian cultural setting of Central Babylonia.¹¹⁹ Therefore, Mandaean incantations are essential to the study of the origin of this people. Rudolph believes that the “Mandaic incantation corpus belongs to a sunken higher religion. . . . The Mesopotamian and Iranian elements of the Mandaean texts and their placement are of major importance when it comes to the question of the Mandaean homeland.”¹²⁰

§ 1.8 - The Mandaean Manuscripts.

It is assumed that the first Mandaean manuscript (*Diwan*) was brought to Europe in 1652 by Carlo Leonelli who was known as Friar Ignatius of Jesus while he was on a mission to Basra. In 1674 François de la Croix brought to Paris the most important Mandaean manuscript, the Ginza. The French

¹¹⁹ Müller-Kessler Ch., “The Mandaean and the Question of their Origin”, ARAM Vol. 16 (2004) p. 55.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 52. For the Mandaean existence in Nippur along with the Jews before the Islam conquest of Mesopotamia see Montgomery, 1913: 103.

ambassador at Constantinople sent other manuscripts in 1678. More Mandaean manuscripts reached Europe successively.¹²¹

Many scholars studied and published Mandaean literature such as M. Thávenot (1663) and M. Norberg (1781), who exerted a considerable effort in laying the foundation of Mandaean textual study. Peterman (1867) made a translation of the Ginza based on four Paris manuscripts and published it under the name *Sidra Rabba*. Depending on this translation, W. Brandt (1893) published a German translation of selected passages.¹²² In 1915 M. Lidzbarski published the translation of *draša d-yahia* (The Book of John), the *Qolasta* (liturgical collection) and the Ginza respectively.

Lidzbarski's distinguished work was continued by E. S. Drower who opened new horizons in the field of Mandaean research. She succeeded where the others failed and her achievements in this field were remarkable. Her dedication to Mandaism and her long stay in Iraq made her welcome among the Mandaean community. She traveled to Iraq many times and on several occasions visited their *bit-manda* (temple), in Liṭlaṭa – Qal'at Ṣaleh, Maisan province (southern Mesopotamia), and became acquainted with their traditions and customs. She won the confidence of the Mandaeans and obtained from them a complete collection of 56 Mandaean manuscripts. This collection is known as "Drower Collection" and deposited in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.¹²³ Lady Drower translated and published most of the

¹²¹ Pallis, 1933 p. 32. For more about Ignatius of Jesus see Lupieri, "Friar Ignatius of Jesus", ARAM Vol. 16, 2004: 25-46.

¹²² Pallis S. A., 1933: 38.

¹²³ Macuch R., 1965: XLIV.

collection, in addition to the Mandaic Dictionary which she compiled and published with R. Macuch in 1963.

The oldest Mandaean manuscript in Europe (Marsh. 691) is kept in the Bodleian library. It is a collection of prayers copied by the scribe Adam Zihrun, son of Bihran Šitlan in the year 1529. This codex belonged to a certain Thomas Marshal (1620 or 21- 1685), an English philologist, and was given to Bodleian in 1689 or 1690 by his servant.¹²⁴

§ 1.9 - The Ginza Rba (The Great Treasure)

The Ginza is a big codex (more than 654 pages or 327 folios) consists of two parts: the Right Ginza (GR) and the Left Ginza (GL) each part opposite the other. The Ginza is divided into twenty-one chapters or tractates: eighteen tractates belong to the right Ginza and three tractates to the left Ginza.

§ 1.9. 1 - The Right Ginza

The first two tractates of (GR 1 and GR 2) include moral teachings and description and praise of the King of Light and his world. The third tractate (GR 3) pp. 83– 148, ¹²⁵ which is the largest in the Ginza, contains the Story of Creation (the subject of this research). The fourth tractate (GR 4) pp. 148-157 is a brief description of Manda d-Hiia's baptism in the heavenly *Yardina* (Jordan) by Mar d-Rabuta (the Lord of Greatness) plus part of Hibil-Ziwa's descent to the underworld. The fifth tractate (GR 5) pp. 157-237 consists of five

¹²⁴ Buckley J. J., 2005: 290.

¹²⁵ Numeration is according to the copy of the Ginza (GRS) used in this research.

sections: (1) Hibil-Ziwa's journey to the Realm of Darkness (or: the underworld). (2) The gods and demons' defeated by Manda d-Hiia. (3) The souls' ascension to the *Maṭarata* (purgatories). (4) Narration of John the Baptist baptizing Manda d-Hiia in the living water of Jordan. (5) The 'uthra Šalmai's questioning by the heavenly figure *Yatrun*.

The sixth tractate (GR 6), pp. 237-248, is the journey of Dinanukt¹²⁶ ("talking in accordance with religion") to the upper worlds. The Seventh tractate (GR 7) pp. 248-257 contains some of John the Baptist's commandments. The eight tractate (GR 8) pp.257-261 is a small tractate which includes Manda d-Hiia's warning the faithful against Rūha. Tractate nine (GR 9) pp. 261-283 includes two sections: (1) The first is called *qarqalta d-šuba kukbia* "the overthrow of seven stars", a polemic chapter against other (false) religious sects. (2) The second section is 'the emanation of Mar d-Rabuta from the *niṭufta* (semen?) of the heavenly Jordan'. It also contains material related to creation. Tractate ten (GR 10) pp. 283-297 is a continuation of the creation story and is called 'the Book of Radiance that radiates in the *pihta*'. Tractate eleven (GR 11), pp. 297-325, is called "the Book of Great Anoš" which deals with the conflict between the

¹²⁶ Dinanukt is a legendary figure of the Ginza. Dinanukt is an old Persian word means "talking in accordance with religion". (MD p. 108) The legend says that *din melek uthra* (a heavenly being) was sent to the wise priest Dinanukt, who wanted to know about where Life is, and the nature of *Kušta*. He fell into a trance and his soul traveled with *din melek*, in a journey to the underworld (*Siniawis*) where he saw the *melki* (spirits) of darkness, and then to the different layers of the World of Light. There the ground was like crystal, and there was no darkness. Eventually, he returned to his body and told his people of what he saw in his journey. (For more analysis of this Ginza figure see Widengren, 1950: 62 ff. See also "How Dana Nuk Visited the Seventh Heaven" MII, Ch. IX p. 300). (Cf. "the saintly reformer", Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* (1935) p. 100).

World of Light and Rūha. It also mentions the faulty creation of the material world by Ptahil.

Tractate twelve (GR 12), pp. 325-341, has seven sections. The first section has the uthra Anoš as the speaker. Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 are hymns some of which are similar to the hymns of the Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean.¹²⁷ Section 6 describes the World of Darkness and its king and inhabitants. Section 7 is a kind of geography; it shows the directions of the worlds and waters. Tractate thirteen (GR 13), pp. 341-349, is called “the Prayer of the *Tarmidia* (Mandaean priests) to the Pious”.¹²⁸ Tractate fourteen (GR 14), pp. 352-362, is called “the Book of the Great Nbat” which narrates the emanation of Yawar, Yōšamin (the second Life) and many other heavenly beings. Tractate fifteen (GR 15), pp. 364-443, consists of twenty poetic sections of the Redeemer speeches and blessings. Section 15 is Ptahil lamentation and threat of waging a war. Section 16 narrates Manda d-Hiia’s visit to Yōšamin and his debate with him. Tractate 16 (GR 16), pp. 446-459, consists of 11 sections, also poetic. The first section speaks of Manda d-Hiia’s visit to the world of the Second Life. The rest are speeches and exhortations of the Redeemer.

Tractate seventeen (GR 17), pp. 462-469, consists of two poetic sections: the first talks about the Great First Mana and the Great Occult Eggs that existed before Mar d-Rabuta (The Lord of Greatness). The second part

¹²⁷ The hymn in section GR 12:4 is identical to CP hymn n. 214 p. 183.

¹²⁸ Buckley believes that the first 13 tractates of the Ginza testify to a fully developed Mandaean Gnosticism (Buckley, 2005: 22).

speaks about the oppression of the Seven (planets) and the Twelve (zodiacs) against the *nišmata* (souls). Tractate twelve (GR 18), pp. 472-491, is a chronology of the material world. It contains information about the three catastrophes which befell the humans in three different epochs or generations.¹²⁹ and many other historical events.

§ 1.9.2 - The Left Ginza

This part of the Ginza is divided into three sections or tractates. The first tractate (GRL I) pp. 46-89 consists of four sections. The first section tells the story of Adam and his death, and how Adam's son Šitil (Seth) volunteers to die before his father. The second section is about Adam's complaints about his death and his lamentation. The third section is about Hawa's (Eve) death. The forth is a description of different *maṭaratia* (watch-houses or purgatories) which the soul has to go through before her final destination.

The second tractate (GRL III) pp. 46-89 consists of twenty-eight sections of poetry. In this tractate the Great Mana speaks, beginning each section with the formula: 'I am a Mana of the Great Life.' The last tractate of the Ginza (GL 3) pp. 89-164 consists of 62 sections and deal with the *nišimta* (soul) and her destiny. It also includes the lamentation of the *mana* personifying the soul.

¹²⁹ For the comparison between these catastrophes and Sodom and Gomorrah see Stroumsa, 1984: 110 ff.

§ 1.10 - The Ginza used in the Research (GRS):

The copy of the Ginza (GRS) used in this work consists of 332 folios (664 pages), and each page consists of 25 lines. It was written in Iran in the late 1990s under the supervision of the Mandaean Council of Ahwaz. The headscribe of this Ginza is Rbai Ganzibra Mhatam Yuhana br Šarat (his Arabic name: Shaikh Jabar the son of Ṭawoos), who is the head-priest of the Mandaean community in Iran (he became a priest in 1948). The colophon at the end of the left part of this Ginza (GRL p. 169) tells us that this copy was written after consulting 5 other Ginzas. The scribes of these Ginzas are: Yahia Ram Zihrun the son of the Rbai Zeki Zihrun, Ram Yuhana the son of Rbai Ram, Zeki Zihrun the son of Ram Zihrun, Sam Yuhana the son of Rbai Behram and Zihrun the son of Mudalal. A copy of Petermann's Ginza was consulted, which he copied during his visit to southern Iraq in the 1840s from 4 Ginzas, as the colophon calls them (A, B, C, D).¹³⁰ Ganzabra Ṣalah Kuḥaili was at the head of the team which consisted of the following scribes and scholars: Tarmida Ṭalib Duraji, Tarmida Najah Kuḥaili, Yalufa Salem Kohaili, Yalufa Jamal Duraji and Yalufa Falah Kuḥaili. For the first time, in centuries, three Mandaean women participated in this work: Mudalal the daughter of Šarat and Simat and Sadia the daughters of Mahnuš.

For this research four other Ginza manuscripts from the Oriental and India Office at The British Library in London were collated to compile a critical apparatus of variants. The first manuscript is under the title: "Liber Adami

¹³⁰ For more details on Heinrich Petermann (1801 – 76) and his visit to the Mandaean community in Iraq see Buckley, 2005: 129 ff.

Mendaice" No. Add 23,599 (henceforth BL 23599) and was presented by Sheik Yahana Chief and High Priest of the Mandaean sect with his petition to her Majesty the Queen, dated 10th December 1872, and forwarded to HM's Ambassador at Constantinople with dispatch No, 3 dated 29th Jan. 1873 from Colonel Herbert, Consul General of Baghdad. The second manuscript bears the title: "Liber Adami Mendaice" No. Add. 23,600 (henceforth: BL 23600). This *Ginza* is the oldest one in the British Library (bought from Mrs. Taylor in April 1860) and consisting of 315 folios and the scribe is Adam Yuhana. The third *Ginza* codex in the British Library is 'Liber Adami Mendaice' Add. 23,601(henceforth BL 23601) copied by Adam Yuhana, son of Sam. The third *Ginza* codex is 'Liber Adami Mandaice' Add. 23,601 dated 1824, also copied by Adam Yuhana, son of Sam. The forth manuscript is entitled: *Sidra Rba Mandaitic*, Oriental 1236 (henceforth BLO 1236).

Due to many factors, the hand written Mandaean manuscripts are in general tiresome and not easy to read, especially the manuscript (Add 23,599 = BL 23599) of the British Library. Some of these factors are:

1. Poor hand writing and careless copying led the scribes to make numerous spelling mistakes in the manuscripts.
2. These mistakes accumulated through the ages and led to many differences in readings.
3. The only method by which the scribe is allowed to edit a text is by placing dots under the wrongly written word or sentence, because the Mandaeans

believe their writings are sacred and incorrect words or sentences cannot be erased or crossed.

4. The Mandaean manuscripts have no paragraph indents or punctuation marks.
5. Many words are hyphenated (especially at the end of the line) which causes confusion to the reader.
6. Ambiguities in Mandaean script often cause uncertainty and confusion in reading hand written Mandaean texts. The letters which cause such confusion are: 𐤀 (𐤒) and 𐤁 (𐤓); 𐤂 (𐤔) and 𐤃 (𐤕); 𐤄 (𐤖) and 𐤅 (𐤗); 𐤆 (𐤘) and 𐤇 (𐤙); 𐤈 (𐤚) and 𐤉 (𐤛); 𐤊 (𐤜) and 𐤋 (𐤝); 𐤌 (𐤞) and 𐤍 (𐤟); 𐤎 (𐤠) and 𐤏 (𐤡); 𐤐 (𐤢) and 𐤑 (𐤣); 𐤒 (𐤥) and 𐤓 (𐤦); 𐤔 (𐤨) and 𐤕 (𐤩); 𐤖 (𐤫) and 𐤗 (𐤬). The computer Mandaic font used in this work attempts to faithfully reproduce the manuscript text, but at the same time compensates for the poor handwriting and careless copying in the manuscripts.

The computerized Mandaic font reproduces original text while correcting scribal errors to a great extent. Most previous scholars were obliged to transliterate the Mandaean texts either into Hebrew or Roman characters. A notable exception, and the first scholar who used a Mandaic typeface, was the Frenchman H. Pognon, in his book *'Inscriptions Mandaïtes des Coupes de Khoubir'*, published in 1898. The computerized characters used in this work are similar to Pognon's. The present work also transliterates every line of the text into Hebrew characters beneath the Mandaic in order to facilitate reading for non-specialists. There are inevitable discrepancies between the present version of the Ginza and the other four versions mentioned above. The

number shown on the margin of some of the pages of the translation correspond to the beginning of the page in the original text.

The translator of the Mandaic texts encounters some difficulties such as:

1. The material of the Mandaean cosmogony, cosmology, theology and soteriology is distributed among much Mandaean literature such as the *ܩܝܢܙܐ ܪܒܐ* *Ginza Rba*, *ܕܪܫܐ ܕܝܗܝܐ* *Draša d-Yahia* (The Book of John), Mandaean Hymns and Prayers; *ܡܫܒܘܬܐ* *Mašbuta*, *ܡܫܩܝܬܐ* *Masqita*, *ܐܢܝܢܝܐ* *Eniania*, etc), and among the different Diwans, such as *Diwan Abatur*. Mandaean literature is written mostly in mystical way and many religious concepts are considered sacred explanation of which are “reserved for those considered able to understand and preserve the gnosis.”¹³¹
2. Most of the Mandaean priests abstain (by law) from discussing profound religious matters with a Mandaean layman or a stranger. The holy scriptures strongly advise Mandaean priests against revealing these scriptures to strangers. For example the *Alf Trisar Šuialia* (The Thousand and Twelve Questions) commences with the following *ܙܗܪܐ* *zhara* “admonition”:

In the name of the Life. *Laufa* (union) and revival of life and a forgiver of sins be there for me N ... by means of these good Questions, hidden from (even) the eyes of the *uthras* and not revealed except to such as guard them, and tell them to one in a generation each to his son. For Hibil-Ziwa placed them in his son’s right hand and said, “Take care, take care, take care,

¹³¹ SA p. xvi.

The Ginza remains as the largest codex which the Mandaeans inherited from their golden era when Gnosticism flourished amongst the civilization of Babylon and Persia in the east and amongst the Greek and Roman empires in the west. In addition to the liturgies, the Ginza contains the oldest Gnostic (Mandaean) tradition. The Mandaean Gnostic library is equally as important as Nag Hammadi Codices and the Dead Sea Scrolls and they deserve more attention and examination from scholars of Semitic studies.¹³⁶

§ 1.11 - The Mandaean Script:

The Mandaic script belongs to the South Mesopotamian branch of Aramaic besides the Syriac-Palmyrene branch in North Syria and the script of Hatra in north Mesopotamia.¹³⁷ The Mandaeans call their alphabet *abgada*. The twenty four letters are sacred and represent the powers of Life and Light. They believe that their inscriptions are protected by Nbu (Babylonian Nabû) “Mercury”, the god of writing and wisdom.¹³⁸ Some scholars, such as Macuch, believe that there is a close relation between the Mandaic and the Elymaic scripts. Others like Nöldke and Lidzbarski suppose that Mandaic script is related to the Nabatîan.¹³⁹ The Mandaic script is known to us either from the Mandaean manuscripts or from amulets and incantations. Most of them were

¹³⁶ Rudolph, HR (Feb., 1969) pp. 210-235, esp. p.222.

¹³⁷ Naveh, 1982: 132.

¹³⁸ MII, p. 240. The old Iraqis believed that science was under the protection of the god Nabû while the goddess Nasaba presided over the art of writing (Roux, 1966: 327).

¹³⁹ Naveh, 1970: 33.

probably composed during the Sasanian era and the early Islamic conquest of Iraq, but the earliest known Mandaic text is a lead amulet from the first half of the third century.¹⁴⁰

No one can precisely determine when the Mandaeans manufactured their script, but Naveh argues that the shapes of the letters suggest that the Mandaic cursive script is a “straightforward evolution from Elymaic.”¹⁴¹ Since Mesene (Maisan) and Characene were neighbours of the kingdom of Elymais, such assumption is strengthened. Many features of the Mandaic script resemble both the Nabataean and the Aramaic of Tang-i Sarvak and Elymaic, such as the letters (◦) *alef*, which is simplified from the Elymaic heart shape, (𐤀) *mem* (𐤁) *bet*, (𐤂) *dalet*, etc., but there is no resemblance between the Mandaic (𐤄) (*š*) and the Elymaic *shen*.¹⁴² Macuch noted, “the most remarkable Mandaean ligatures in the Elymaean inscriptions are the relative particle (𐤅) *d-* and the conjunction (𐤆) *kd* which includes it.”¹⁴³

There remains the possibility that the Naṣoreans had brought their own script when they migrated to Southern Mesopotamia, since many Mandaean hymns and prayers suggest such a migration. Macuch believes that the Mandaic script had developed in the second century C.E., since there are no

¹⁴⁰ Yamauchi, 1967: 2.

¹⁴¹ Naveh, 1970: 34.

¹⁴² Coxon, 1970: 20. He writes: “the Mandaic script is the nexus between the Nabataean and Tang-i Sarvak scripts, although Mandaic has a close formal similarity to Nabataean” (For the comparative script chart see Naveh, 1970: 35).

¹⁴³ Macuch, “The Origins of the Mandaeans and their Script”, JSS, 1971: 187.

significant differences between the Mandaean script on the one hand and the Elymaean and Charcenian on the other.¹⁴⁴

§ 1.12 - Book III of the Ginza Rba:

Book three, or the Book of Creation, is the largest tractate of the Mandaean's holy book the 'Ginza Rba'. The Ginza names this tractate as: ܪܙܐܘܫܕܪܐ ܪܙܐܘܫܕܪܐ ܪܙܐܘܫܕܪܐ ܪܙܐܘܫܕܪܐ *raza u sidra qadmaia d-šuta haita qadmaita dhuat mn laqadmaia* 'The Mystery and the First Book of the First Living Doctrine which was from aforetime (or: from the very beginning)'.¹⁴⁵ This tractate includes the cosmogony; the origin of the world of light and the world of darkness, the rise of the First Great Life, the Second Life (Yōšamin), the Third Life (Abatur) and the Forth Life (Ptahil); the demiurge who created the cosmos and *Tibil* (the earthly world). It also narrates the creation of the Mandaean redeemer Manda d-Haiia ('Gnosis of Life' or: 'Knowledge-of-Life') and his descent to the underworld and his triumph against the creatures of darkness. It narrates the creation of Adam and Eve and the descent of the *nišimta* (soul) into the *štōna* (the human body). Tractate III also includes an elaborate description of the demonic Rūha and her planetary sons and her attempts to seduce Adam in order to entrap him in the world.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 190.

¹⁴⁵ Widengren believes that the Mesopotamian back ground of heavenly books preexistent before creation and containing destinies is clear in the conception of the Book III of the Ginza (Widengren, 1950: 10, 74-75).

The “Mystery and the First Book of the First Living Doctrine” begins with folio 42r (p. 83) and ends at folio 74v (p. 148: 6) in the copy of the Ginza used in this work.¹⁴⁶ The language of is mostly poetic and written in classical Mandaic. The text consists of 2 prose sections and 2 poetic sections. The text begins with a prose section (pp. 83: 15 – 87: 21) followed by a prolonged poetic section (pp. 87: 21 – 119: 1). A second, but smaller, prose section is found nearly in the middle of the text (pp. 119: 1 – 120: 11) followed by another poetic section until the end of the text.

§ 1.13 - The Mandaean Story of Creation

Mesopotamia gave birth to many legends and myths such, as the epic of Gilgamesh, Enūma Eliš, Ninūrta, Ea and Inana. Out of the crucible of Mesopotamia, the land of reeds and swamps comes forth the Mandaean story of Creation. It is a unique piece of literature infused with Babylonian gods, demons and biblical motifs. With the conquest of Babylon by the Persian Empire 539 BCE,¹⁴⁷ and the subsequent Greek invasion of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE,¹⁴⁸ the Mandaean story of creation comes under the influence of Persian dualism and Greek mythology.

It addresses *hiia qadmaia* the Ancient Life, the afterlife, Dualism, and cosmology. The language symbolic of Gnosticism is very poetical and is the first complete account of creation from Mesopotamia. It contains ethical and

¹⁴⁶ The Mandaean conceived of hidden books in heaven existing before creation. (Ibid)

¹⁴⁷ George Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, (1964) p. 352.

¹⁴⁸ Cantor N. F., *Alexander the Great*, (2005) p. 142.

religious principles that emerged during the period when Mesopotamians demonised their gods. The Mandaean priests still recite the story of creation, on the banks of the rivers, in the same manner as their ancestors the Naṣraeans used to do in the ancient times.

The Mandaean story of creation is the product of the beginning of the Gnostic era when the Mandaean world was imprinted by the dualism of ܡܠܟܐ *alma d-nhūra* the World of Light and ܡܠܟܐ ܕܗܫܘܟܐ *alma d-hšuka* the World of Darkness. The World of Light was conceived by unknown god ܢܘܟܪܝܝܐ *nukraia* (alien); a sublime being usually referred to as ܡܢܐ *mana* (the First) Intelligence, ܗܝܝܐ *hiia* The Life and ܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܗܘܪܐ *malka d-nhūra* the King of Light. ܡܠܟܐ ܕܗܫܘܟܐ *alma d-hšuka* the World of Darkness is the product of the dark waters and is ruled by the King of Darkness, the leviathan ‘Ur, and his mother/spouse Rūha; the goddess of the underworld. The Mandaean story of Creation narrates the doomed revolt of the vice-regent Yōšamin (the Second Life) and his sons, the uthras, Abatur (the Third Life) and Ptahil (the Forth Life and the demiurge who created the physical world), against the higher deities of the World of Light. It also describes the eternal conflict between Light and Darkness and the defeat of the World of Darkness on the hands of the valiant uthra Manda d-Hiia (Gnosis of Life) when he descended to the underworld and subdued the evil creatures of darkness. The prime of the Story of Creation is the creation of Adam, the First Man, by Ptahil with the assistance of Rūha and her sons ܫܒܝܗܝܝܐ *šibiahiia* (the Planets), but Ptahil could not make Adam stand on his feet. A *mana*, a sparkle of Light, was

brought from the World of Light and cast into Adam's trunk. At that moment Adam opened his eyes and stood on his feet. The beings of Light created Hawa (Eve), to be Adam's wife in order to spread ܫܘܪܒܬܐ ܕܗܝܝܐ *šurbta d-hiia* the family of Life.

The Mandaean story of creation contains many obscure terms of creation such as *pira* (fruit), *mana* (intelligence, mind) *ziwa* (radiance), *nhūra* (light) *ayar* (ether), *yardina* (Jordan), *uthras* (beings of Light), *hapiqia mia* (streams of water), *yura* (a being of light, brilliance), ܢܝܫܝܡܬܐ ܘܪܘܗܐ *nišimta urūha* (soul and spirit) and many more. There is not one single account of the creation of the cosmos, but rather multiple accounts. In the *Ginza Rba* there are no less than seven accounts of the Creation, viz. in tractates 1, 2, 3, 10, 13, 15, and 18. Tractate III, however, contains the most part of the story. This work endeavors to explain such obscurities for a better understanding of the Mandaean legend of creation. Book III consists of four fractions; two written in prose and two in poetry:

1. The first fraction (GRR, pp. 83: 16 - 87: 21) begins with prose language narrating the first emanation of the Mana and the manifestation of the Life and the other principles of cosmogony, including the creation of the Mandaean messenger Manda *d-Hiia*.
2. The second fraction (GRR, pp. 87: 21 – 119: 1) is written in poetical language. It is the longest fraction of book III and narrates: (a) The descent of the Messenger Manda *d-Hiia* to the World of Darkness and his

confrontation with the forces of the World of Darkness. (b) The creation of the material world by the Mandaean demiurge “Ptahil”.

3. The third fraction (GRR, pp. 119 - 120: 11) is the shortest fraction, written in prosaic language, and speaks about the time of creation and about Ptahil’s intentions concerning the creation of Adam and Eve with the assistance of the Planets.
4. The fourth fraction (GRR, pp. 120: 11 until the end of the book i.e. p. 148) narrates (a) The creation of Adam and Eve. (b) The descent of the *nišimta* “soul” into Adam’s body (c) Rūha’s attempts to seduce Adam in order to capture him in the world. (d) Manda d-Hiia prevents Rūha and her entourage “the Planets” from tempting Adam. (e) Description of the sects which were produced from the forces of Darkness.

§ 1.14 - The Main features of Mandaic Poetry:

Since the Mandaeans were not at all familiar with punctuation, it is hard to distinguish between the prosaic and poetic passages in the Mandaean texts. In spite of this, Lidzbarski could differentiate between the two types. He wrote a plausible introduction dedicated to the Mandaic and Aramaic poetry in his valuable book “*Mandäische Liturgien*”.¹⁴⁹

The language of the Ginza belongs to the classical period, which was not under the influence of the Arabic language.¹⁵⁰ This may prove that the

¹⁴⁹ Lidzbarski, *Mandäische Liturgien*, Berlin (1920).

¹⁵⁰ Macuch has divided the Mandaic literature into three historical periods: classical, postclassical and modern. The final redaction of the classical period took place in the year 272 CE according to the Mandaean copyist Zāzai d-Gawaztā (Macuch, 1965: LXV).

redaction of the book was long before the Islam conquest of Iraq in the seventh century C.E. The Ginza is written mainly in poetry which “represents a fully developed Babylonian-Aramaic idiom and a poetic skill which has neither surpassed nor equaled in Mandaean literature.”¹⁵¹ Their geographical remoteness also made them less exposed to the Hellenistic influences.¹⁵²

Unfortunately, this aspect of Mandaic literature remained neglected by the Semitists until Söderbergh shed the light on various Mandaic poetic forms compared to the psalms of the Coptic Psalms of Thomas. He claimed priority for the Mandaic hymns over the Coptic ones.¹⁵³ After his detailed comparison he concluded that the “Mandaic poetry, had on the whole a regular beat of 3:3, that is the line consisted of two hemistiches with three stresses in each hemistich.”¹⁵⁴ Example:

ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ ܕܐܫܝܐ	שאלטוך על עותריא כאסיא
ܕܥܬܪܝܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ	ܕܩܝܡܝܐ ܕܡܫܬܒܝܐ ܕܪܪܒܝܐ
ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ	שאלטוך על יארדנא ܕܪܪܒܝܐ
ܕܥܬܪܝܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ ܕܥܬܪܝܐ	ܘܥܠ ܡܝܐ ܗܝܝܐ ܕܪܐܘܝܐ

He made you rule over the concealed uthras,
 who are standing and praising the great (ones)
 He made rule over the Jordan of the great (ones),
 and over thee living and vigorous waters.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Macuch, 1965: LXV

¹⁵² Jonas, 1958: 48.

¹⁵³ Söderbergh, 1949: 127 f.

¹⁵⁴ Greenfield, 1989: 101.

¹⁵⁵ GRR, p. 89: 8

The transposition language¹⁵⁶ is a main feature of the Mandaic poetry; that is repeating the same verse with changing position of the words. Example:

תריסאר בוריא קאבלאת מינה אכצמכ אכסס אכסלג אכג
מינה קאבלאת תריסאר בוריא אכג אכסלג אכצמכ אכסס
She conceived by him twelve beasts,
by him she conceived twelve beasts.¹⁵⁷

Another interesting feature of the Mandaic poetry is the paired words. The following examples taken from book III of the Ginza:

זריזא אכאס טאגאסא, “burn and blaze” (89: 25), יאקדיא ומהאביניא אכסס אכסס אכסס
“flaw and deficiency” האסיר ובציר סמכא נכסא, (89: 1) “the well armed and equipped” ומזאריא
“witchcraft and sorcery” הארשיא ופודריא סמכא נכסא, (88: 22) “repulsive and dreadful (or: ugly and appalling)” (91: 4), (90: 3)
“the valiant and confirmed” זריזא ומקאימא אכאס טאגאסא, (93: 7)
עריא וראוויא אכסס אכסס, (93: 11) “the righteous elect” בהיריא זידקא אכסס
“radiant and resplendent” (91:25) etc.

Greenfield draws out attention to a “favorite topos” in the Mandaean literature which concerns parts of the body and senses – eyes, ears, mouth hands, knees, feet etc.¹⁵⁸ The following from book III is a good example. These verses remind us of the Song of Songs:

אכאס טאגאסא	קומתיך ארזא ראמא
אכסלג אכצמכ אכג	לימאליך יסאיית מיא
סמכא נכסא אכסס אכסס	אנאת שאקאך גופניא איאר
אכסלג אכצמכ אכסס	לימאליך יראמית דאהבא

¹⁵⁶ or: “ergative language”.

¹⁵⁷ GRR, 113: 23.

¹⁵⁸ Greenfield, 1989: 106.

אנאת עדיך כיניא איאר	סרס סרס סרס סרס
לימאליך דראמית כאספא	לחלחל סרס סרס סרס
אנאת איניך איניא דזיוא	סרס סרס סרס סרס
לימאליך דכולא מאליאבה	לחלחל סרס סרס סרס

Your figure is (like) a high cedar,
 why do you wash with water?
 Your thighs are vine of ether,
 why do you wear gold?
 your wings (arms) are veils of ether,
 why do you wear silver?
 Your eyes are eyes of radiance
 why do you fill them with kohl? ¹⁵⁹

In book III we find good examples of the Naṣoraeen Gnostic poetry which needs more attention. In this respect Jonas plausibly noted: "The Mandaic poetry gives wonderful expression to the gratefully believing acceptance of the message and the ensuing conversion of the heart and renewal of life."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ GRR, 137: 21

¹⁶⁰ Jonas, 1958: 89. Stroumsa indicates that the Gnostic language is an imagery one and it should be studied as "mystical poetry" (Stroumsa, 1984:3).

§2 - Analysis of the Narrative

When the Pira was inside the Pira, and when the Ayar was inside the Ayar, and when the great Mana of glory was there, great and mighty Manas came into being, whose radiance is so vast and whose light is great; no one before them was in the great fruit which was so immense and without limit, and whose radiance was greater than the words of the mouth and his light was bigger than what the lips can portray. As He was inside (or: in the matrix of) the Fruit, a thousand thousand fruits without limit, and countless myriads of fruits emanated from him. In each and every fruit were a thousand thousand fruits without limit, and countless myriads of *škinas*. They all stand there and praise the great Mana of glory who exists (lives) in the great Ether of Life that is within the Jordan (river) of the white waters which gushed out from the Great Mana. Then the great Jordan came into being, and from the great Jordan, Jordans without count poured forth. ¹⁶³ (See Chart A).

§2 .1. 1 - ܡܝܪܐ Pira:

The meaning of *Pira* is uncertain and doubtful; of various suggested meanings, perhaps that of “Fruit” (H. פרי) or “vagina”. ¹⁶⁴ This term is used by the Mandaeans as an expression of emanation.¹⁶⁵ In the first version of creation we find out that the *Pira* (fruit) and the *Ayar* (ether) are the two primal elements of existence and the “habitat” in which the Great Mana (mind, intelligence) existed. In the Mandaean belief, the *Pira Rba* (Great Pira) is the origin of all things.¹⁶⁶ It existed before creation and before all worlds (aeons) and is the core matter of existence. It is

¹⁶³ GRR p. 83: 19.

¹⁶⁴ The second meaning for the pira is “cleft” or “vagina” as in, ܡܝܪܐ ܡܝܪܐ “vagina and phallus” (MD. P., 372).

¹⁶⁵ The epithet Fruit used of the moon-god in Mesopotamia, of whom it is said that he is the Fruit which is born by itself, ‘*en-bu šá ina ra-ma-ni-šū ib-ba-nu*’ (Tallquist, *Akkadische Götterepitheta*, p. 24 cited by Widengren, 1946: 22 n. 3).

¹⁶⁶ Other Gnostics such as Basilides (2nd century religious teacher in Alexandria – Egypt) believe that all the universe and creations derived their being from the cosmic seed (Wilson, 1958: 124).

According to Zurvanism, the old Persian religion, Time enters a body within the seed of creation or unformed matter, from which all forms arose (Zaehner, 1955: 111 ff.).

The “mana” of a human being is, so to speak, a spark of this flame, a temporarily detached part of the Great “Mana”. This Gnostic conception appears in many forms of syncretistic philosophy.¹⁹⁹ In some features the Mandaean Mana corresponds to the Persian *Vohu Mana* (later form “*Bahman*”) which means “good mind”. It is the “power” which represents intelligence and wisdom.²⁰⁰ He is the Lord of the Heaven who established his sovereignty through Truth.²⁰¹ In Mandaeism, “truth” ܡܠܬܐ *kušta* is an element closely related to the first creation. It is the “heavenly” oath which every Mandaean has to take during baptism:²⁰²

In great radiance am I immersed and in resolute light am I established. Manda baptized me; *kušta* (oath) confirmed me.²⁰³

As to the relation between the Mandaean Mana and the Iranian “Vohu-Mana”, Lady Drower points out:

The “mana” is the eternal part of the human soul which when freed of earthly pollution is re-united to the Great Mana. The Great Mana seems to correspond to the Zoroastrian Vohu-Mana, and represents a Cosmic Intelligence or Supersoul.²⁰⁴

In Zoroastrianism the *Vohu-Manah* (the good mind) is in a struggle with *Aka-Manah* (the evil or bad mind), and at the end *Vohu-Mana* will prevail.²⁰⁵ In the Mandaean literature the *mana* represents intelligence or the mind, from which the whole of existence came into being. The only occasion where we come across evil

¹⁹⁹ MHZ p. 35 n. 1.

²⁰⁰ See MG, p. xxxii das ich etwa mit "Geist" (oder wohl noch besser mit "Intelligenz") übersetzen möchte.

²⁰¹ *The Gathas of Zarathushtra, Hymns and Praise of Wisdom*, translated by P. Nanavutty 1999: 48-9.

²⁰² For Mandaean baptism see above §1.41.

²⁰³ CP p. 52. (*Masiqta*, Hymn No. 63) The text:

[illegible]

²⁰⁴ DA n. 10, p. 18.

²⁰⁵ Boyce 1975: 283. See also Zaehner, 1955: 121.

manas in the Mandaean literature is in the journey of the messenger Hibil-Ziwa to the underworld, where first met Rūha, and when he descended further, Hibi-Ziwa encountered the two spirits of Darkness which were called *manas*:

"I went (downwards) and I found those two great Manas of Darkness." 206

The great, secret first Mana concealed himself in his *škina* for nine hundred and ninety nine millions (?) of years before he became manifest and initiated the existence, as we read in one of the hymns:

I worship, laud and praise that great, secret, First *Mana* who dwelt for nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand myriads of years alone in his on *škina* – for no companion came to him; save that great, secret First *Mana*. For he came into existence therein and developed therein. ²⁰⁷

During this endless time of the Mana's "incubation" in his *škina* "cocoon", the whole being was inert and the whole of existence was in oblivion. Nothing existed until the Great Mystic Mana decided to emanate from himself and with him three hundred and sixty-six mighty celestial world of light came into being and shone:

I worship, laud and praise that Mystic First Mind (*Mana*) of Glory, who emanated from Himself, whose brilliance exceeds all (other) mystic glories; it is greater than word of mouth (can describe) and his light mightier than lips can express for He is the *Mana* (Mind), the great, the mysterious, the First of Glory, the great mighty *Mana*, in the radiance of which banner three hundred and sixty-six mighty celestial worlds of light shine.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ GRR book 5 p. 163: 10. The text:

207 CP p. 36. (*Masiqta* Hymn 36) Drower's translation, text collated:

²⁰⁸ CP n. 374 p. 267, (Mandaic hymn No. 374, p. 401) Drower's translation, text collated:

Mandaean literature describes the Manas as pure mass of radiance and light. No one can behold their images because their radiance is blinding the eyes and their light is dazzling. When Manda d-Hiia brought Hibil into the presence of the Manas, he was afraid of their immense radiance and clear light:

He aroused, went and led him (Hibil) into the presence the Glorious Manas. When Hibil, the fore-ordained Mana, entered he was startled because their radiance was transcendent and their light was overwhelming. He was not able to behold their images because their radiance was colossal and their light was enormous.²¹⁴

When the messenger Hibih-Ziwa returned from his journey from the World of Darkness to the World of Light, the *Mana* and his Counterpart ܡܢܐ ܘܡܘܬܐ *mana udmuth* received him and welcomed him. In order to receive full purification he descended towards the First Jordan “of the Mana and his counterpart” and his father (Manda d-Hiia) baptized him and pronounced secret ܠܫܢܐ ܪܫܡܝܐ *rušmia* (signs) over him.²¹⁵

The following verse is one of the most beautiful verses in the Ginza which is recited at the initiation of a new priest. The Mana speaks about his dwelling in the sea until wings were formed for him. At the moment he became a winged creature, he spread his wings and flew towards the Place of Light:

I am a great *mana*, a *mana* am I, a son of the Great Ones. I dwelt in the sea, in the sea I dwelt until wings were formed for me, until for me

who is over the all, who exists in his imperishability, since he [is in] the pure light into which no eye may look” (Rudolph, 1983: 61, 62 and 63). Lady Drower in her argument against those who claim that neo-Platonism influenced Naṣōraean gnosis directly or indirectly raises the following question: “As for the possibility that neo-Platonism influenced Naṣōraean gnosis *directly*, and ‘directly’ should be stressed, why the Naṣōraeans adopted the word Mana for the Creative Mind instead of the Greek νοῦς (Nous)?” (SA p. 46) She emphasizes that “The word used for “Mind”, *mana* is not in the sense Semitic but Iranian” (SA p. 2).

²¹⁴ GR book 5: 1 p. 159: 16.

²¹⁵ GRR book 5: 1 pp. 178-9.

could not make him stand on his feet. He, therefore, had to fetch a hidden *mana* (soul) from the House of Life and cast it into the bodies of Adam and his wife Eve.²²⁰ This being of light *mana* (soul) had to sojourn in the ܫܦܝܢܝܐ *špinza* “inn” (the human body) against its will.²²¹ Because of this imprisonment (in the stinking body of man), the *mana* (soul) laments and complains:

“Why did you carry me away from abode into captivity and cast me into the stinking body?”²²²

The lamentation of the *mana* (soul) is the main theme of GRL book 2, and bears the characteristics of the lamentations of ancient Mesopotamia:

“I am a Mana of the great Life I am a Mana of the mighty Life. Who has made me live in the Tibil, who has thrown me into the body’s trunk?”²²³

“For a long time I have endured and been dwelling in the world”²²⁴

“A Mana am I of the great Life. Who has thrown me into the suffering of the worlds, who has transported me to the evil darkness?”²²⁵

On the other hand, it is through the sacrifice of the *mana* or the *nišmta* (the soul) the World of Light could defeat the World of Darkness:

O, *nišimta* soul rise and go and enter inside the body and be a prisoner inside the Palace. The rebellious Lion will be captured by you, the grim furious Lion. The Dragon will be captured by you, and killed in on the

²²⁰ GRR book 10, pp. 287-8.

²²¹ GRL book 3: 20 p. 122: 12. We find the same conception of the “inn” in the “Hymn of the Pearl”, Act of Thomas (Jonas, 1958: 55-6).

²²² GRR, book 16: 2 pp. 452-3. The text:

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ

²²³ GRL book 2: 1 pp. 46-7. The text:

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ

²²⁴ GRL book 2: 3, p. 50: 22. The text:

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ

²²⁵ GRL book 2: 3, p. 49: 20. The text:

ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܢܝܫܡܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ

Lady Drower states, "Today the word *yardina* (Jordan) is applied not only to running water used in baptism and immersion, but to any flowing stream; yet the conjunction of John the Baptist and the Jordan is significant."²⁵⁴

§2.1.5 - ܡܠܟܬܐ Škina (celestial dwelling):

ܡܠܟܬܐ *škinata* has its usual ambiguity as the other Gnostic Mandaean terms. In creation it is meant to be the celestial dwelling, but it is also used as the cult-hut in which the Mandaean rites take place. The *škinata* or *ʿndruna* is a booth built of reeds and intertwined with myrtle and roses.²⁵⁵ It is where the priest sits and from which he performs his duties like the marriage ceremony. The worldly *škina* used in the rituals is a reproduction of the *škina* of the World of Light. It is through the *škina* that Mandaeans can experience the Divine Godhead.

The ܡܠܟܬܐ *škinata* (celestial dwellings)²⁵⁶ are the product of the first emanation and they became the celestial abode of the Mandaean deities; "the Life", the Mana and their *uthras*. The *škina* was founded by the Life above the *tanna* in the great Jordan "Piriawis":

Piriawis, the great Jordan of the First Life, which all healings is afire
like the glory flaming in the ܡܠܟܬܐ *tanna* (matrix?). When Life was

carrying death away from the house of life. O living waters from the house of life, let the good come and be well, but let the bad be shattered (like a pot)" (Albright, *AJSL* 1919 pp. 161-195, esp p. 186).

²⁵⁴ SA p. xiv.

²⁵⁵ For the details of the construction of the *škinata* by the Mandaean priests see MII pp. 152-3.

²⁵⁶ Cf. שכניה The biblical Hebrew word for Tabernacle *mišcan*, is used in the sense of dwelling-place in OT, Psalm 132:5 "Before I find a place for God, *mishcanot* (dwelling-places) for the Strong One of Israel" (עד אמצא מקום ליהוה משכנות לאביר יעקב). In Talmudic literature, the *Shekhinah* is God himself (Sholem G., 1962: 163). Quispel believes that there is a close connection between the *Shekhinah* in Jewish Mysticism and the Mandaean concept of *Adam Qadamaia* "the primordial Man" (Quispel G., "Ezekiel 1: 26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis", *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (Mar. 1980), pp. 1- 13, esp. p. 3).

The celestial Škinas developed from the First Mystic Škina:

Praised is that great mystic *škina* and praised the three hundred and sixty *škinas* which proceeded from that first great mystic *škina*.²⁶²

From these mystical dwellings (or: sanctuaries) of the high beings, mystic sprouts came into being:

The proven, pure one spoke saying to the Great One: "If it pleases you, Great One, if it pleases you Great Ones, a world of light has been made Created is a world of light and a company has been established therein, *Škinas* have been set up therein. It will be bright in your praise, in your praise it will shine, and will be blessed with your blessing. Mystic sprouts (offspring) will come into being and at your word they will flourish, they will flourish at your word and sprouts that are worthy will be raised up."²⁶³

In another hymn, the *Škina* appears to be the “divine abode” in which the Great Mana “cocooned” himself before revealing himself to the worlds. The idea appears to be that the Great Mana has its period of quiescence, ceasing to be.²⁶⁴ He became manifest only when He was fully developed in his *Škina*:

I worship, laud and praise that great, secret, First *Mana* who abode for nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand myriads of years alone in his own *Škina* – for no Companion came to him; (none existed) save

[illegible]

²⁶² CP p. 155. (Mandaic Hymn n. 171.) Drower's translation, text collated:

[illegible]

²⁶³ CP p. 187. (=Mandaic CP Hymn n 234 p. 245) Drower's translation, text collated:

[illegible]

²⁶⁴ CP, n. 4 p. 188.

škinta!" And those crowns which thou intendest to distribute amongst the priests of the *škinta* shall be (held) in they hand.²⁷³

In the *škinta*, the *šualia* (novice) receives his mystic knowledge from his *Rba* (teacher). During these seven days and seven nights of the novice's solitude in the *škinta*, he and his master, observe the strictest rules of purity. The main purpose of the earthly *škinta* is the consecration of a new priest and performing the *masiqta* (ascension) rituals. Lady Drower believes that Mandaean *škinta* is related to 'the sanctuary of a Nestorian church,'²⁷⁴ while, in the Talmudic conception, the *Shekhinah* represents God's dwelling and glory in the created world.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ ATŠ II [422] p. 286. (Mandaic p. 105). The text:

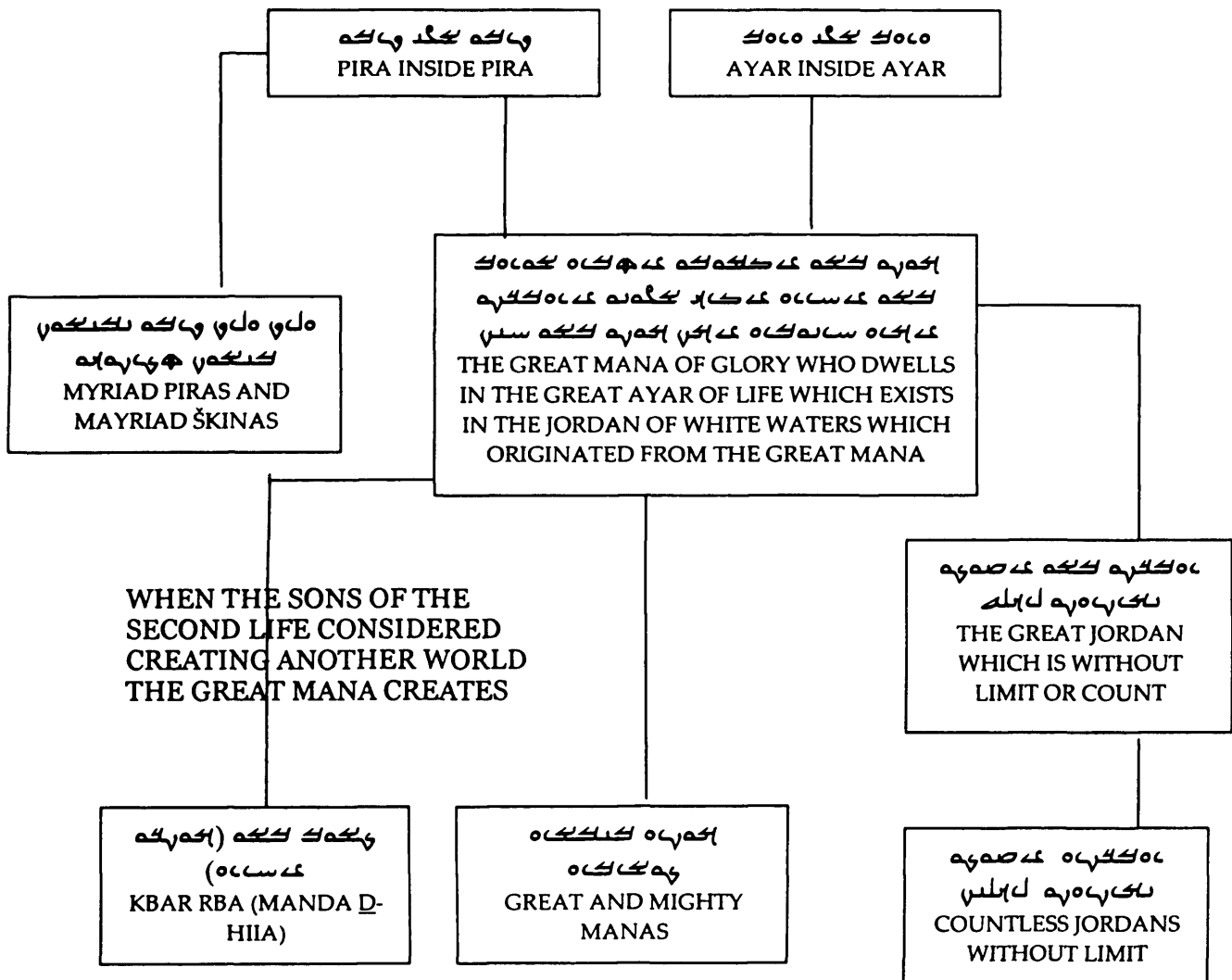
[illegible]

²⁷⁴ Drower 1962: XIII.

²⁷⁵ For the *Shekhinah* as the divine power between light and darkness, see Wolfson, "Light through Darkness", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vo. 81, No. 1. (Jan. 1988), pp. 73-95 esp. p. 85.

𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎹𐎢𐎡

TEXT 1
GINZA RABA
PAGE 83-4
Chart (A)



§ 2. 2. - The Second Account of the Theogony

§ 2. 2 - The Second Account of the Theogony:

In the second account of theogony (GRR book III p. 84: 14 ff) In addition to the previous Gnostic terms, mentioned in the first version of creation, we come across new terms in the second version; *yura* (radiance), *hiia tiniania* (the Second life) and *hapiqia mia* (the streams of water). Some of these terms are peculiar and difficult to understand and *Yura* is one of them. The main events in this account are: (a) The creation of the *yardina rba* “Great Jordan” (b) The Life is born from the great Jordan (c) The Life addresses Itself (or: Himself) with a request and begets the Second Life (d) The Second Life calls forth *uthras* and sets up *škinas* and creates his own Jordan (e) Three *uthras* come into being and address a request to the Second Life to grant them permission to raise *škinas* for themselves. What the three *uthras* requested from the Second Life was granted to them:

When the fruit was still in the fruit, when the *Ayar* (ether) was still in the *Ayar*, and when the great ܝܘܪܐ *Yura* (Radiance), whose ܙܝܘܐ *ziwa* radiance and ܢܗܘܪܐ *nhūra* light are so vast and extensive, before which no one existed, and from which the great Jordan of living water came into being. The water flowed to the earth of ether on which the Life sat, and the Life presented himself in the likeness of the great Mana, from which he came into being, and the Life addressed himself with a request. By the first request an eternal *uthra* came into being, whom the Life called ܚܝܝܐ ܬܝܢܝܢܝܐ *hiia tiniania* ‘the Second Life’. Countless and endless ܘܬܪܐ *uthras* also came into being. From the Life a Jordan ܝܪܕܝܢܐ *yardina* came into being, which like the first Jordan flowed into the earth of light, and the Second Life stood (or: baptized) in it. And that Second Life called forth *uthras* and set up ܫܟܝܢܐ *škinas* and called forth a Jordan, in which the *uthras* were set up (or was baptized).

Three *uthras* came into being, who addressed a request to the Second Life; they were then allowed to produce *škinas* for themselves. What the three *uthras* requested from the Second Life was granted to them. They consulted together and produced *škinas*. They petitioned and spoke to their father; they asked their father and said to him: “Are you the one who created this Jordan of living water, which is so marvelous and whose aroma is so fragrant, and the *uthras* which were established (or: baptized) in it and which are so great, and are they your *uthras* which were established (or: baptized) in it?” The Second Life replied, speaking to the three *uthras*: “As for me, your father, the Life created me, and the Jordan belongs to the Life, and you are brought into being by the power of the Life.’ Then they spoke to him: ‘Give us of your radiance and your light and of that which surrounds you and we shall depart and go below the streams of water سوماكاه *hapiqia mia*, call forth *škinas* for you, establish a world for you, and may the world belong to us and to you.” (Chart II)

§ 2.2.1 - ۛۛۛ Yura:

Yura is one of the beings of Light in the Mandaean theogony, but the Mandaean writings do not provide us with sufficient account of him. The Mandaic Dictionary defines him as: Iur, iura (< יורא) light, brilliance, being of light.²⁷⁶ He is a spirit of light and, the treasurer who lives with his *dmuta* (counterpart) in their *škina*. *Yura* or *Yur* describes himself:

I am *Yur* son of thou-art-bright".²⁷⁷ "I am *Yur* son of *Barit* (I shone forth). In great effulgence the radiance glowed (with heat?). The *tanna* (vapour or: matrix) dissolved and a *škinta* came into being, a *škinta* came into existence and was established in the House of Life.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ In Arabic **جواهر** *jauhar* gems or jewels.

²⁷⁷ ATŠ p. 281 and n. 6. ܐܢܗ ܗܝ ܒܪ ܒܪܝܬ ܡܢܢܐܢܐ *ana hu yur br barit* Mandaean ATŠ p. 102 q. 392.

²⁷⁸ CP p. 9 Hymn n. 12 (Ms no. 12 p. 48). The text:

O Yawar Rba, Yur Rba, Treasurer, king of worlds of light, free me, rid me of my sin, my trespasses, my follies, my stumblings and my errors.²⁸²

Other Mandaean writings call him mystic. In the following hymn *yura* is classified with *šalmai* and *nadbai*, the great guardians of the Mandaean's sacred rivers:

You will behold the great mystic *Yura* whom they planted. You will see *Šalmai* and *Nidbai* dwelling in a great cloud of light. In that cloud they dwell and put in charge of all jordan. ²⁸³

Finally Lady Drower states, "As *Yura* is unusual as a form of *Yur* it is tempting to consider יורה "the first rain", "spring, "early season". ²⁸⁴

§ 2. 2. 2 - ܚܝܐ *hiia* The Life:

The Life is the supreme deity in the Mandaean belief. He is usually described as *nukraiia* "alien", "remote", "ineffable" since nobody has ever seen His brilliance and glory ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ ²⁸⁵. He is the source of all existence both seen and unseen; He is the creative force that came into existence before the existence:²⁸⁶

Thou art enduring, First Life before Whom no being had existence, Unearthly One [Alien] from world of light, Supreme being that art above all works, above the Ancient Radiance and above the First Light; above the life which emanated from Life and above the Truth [*kušṭa*] which was of old in the Beginning. ²⁸⁷

²⁸² CP p. 156. Drower's translation, text collated:

ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ

²⁸³ CP p. 304. Drower's translation, text collated. The text:

ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ ܕܠܢܝܫ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܠܗܝܠܗ ܠܙܝܘܬܗ ܘܩܪܗ

²⁸⁴ CP n. 5 p. 183.

²⁸⁵ CP p. 40. Mandaean *Masiqta* (Ascension) hymn No. 43 p. 138.

²⁸⁶ SA p. 1.

²⁸⁷ CP p. 40. Drower's translation, text collated:

The Life knows that life came into being on the land of Light and from the Life, the water came into being, and from the water, the radiance came into being, and from the radiance, the light, and from the light, the *uthras* came into being, who are standing and praising the Life.²⁸⁸

The World of Light came into existence through a series of emanations from the First Life.²⁹⁰ As soon as the First Life *hiia qadmaiia* arose from his *škina* he created three hundred and sixty Jordans and appointed two guards upon each of them . . . then he created three hundred and sixty worlds of Light. ²⁹¹

[illegible][illegible]

سہ ماہی کھانہ سب کھانے کے لیے ہے، اس لیے یہ بھی کہیں کہیں ہوتا ہے کہ ... سہ ماہی ایک کھانہ ہے، اس لیے یہ بھی کہیں کہیں ہوتا ہے کہ ...

105

called the Second Life, also *uthras* without limit or count came into being.³⁰⁴

The Second Life played the most important role in the creation of the semi-physical world (the world which is located beneath the World of Light). As soon as he came into existence, the Second Life became obsessed with the thought of creation³⁰⁵. He incurred the great schism in the World of Light when he allowed the three *uthras* (his sons, especially Abatur) to go down below *ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ* *hapiqia mia* the “streams of water” (the waters that separate the world of light from the world of darkness) and create their own world and ignore the name of the Life.³⁰⁶

The Second Life’s creation of a new world was considered by the World of Light as an evil act of rebellion which “instigated the Great Controversy, never to be resolved in all eternity”³⁰⁷. Yōšamin “revealed the secret of the Great Ones” and threw controversy into the Light.³⁰⁸ The Mandaean faith dictates that the world (which was created by Yōšamin) is the source of all evils and all errors and deficiency is the product of a “divine tragedy” caused by Yōšamin.³⁰⁹ Some Mandaean writings

³⁰⁴ GRR 84: 20. Cf. the Syriac writer Theodore Bar Konai’s (8th/9th Century C.E.) story about a certain Battai whose doctrine dictates: ‘Before the beginning of all things, there had been divinity who divided himself into two and from whom the Good and Evil came to be, the Good gathered-together the lights, and the Evil the darkness. Then the Evil gained understanding, and rose to make war upon the Father of Greatness. The Father of Greatness pronounced a word, from which were borne seven powers. But seven demons set themselves up against the Lord God and against the Powers he had engendered: after having shackled these adversaries, they stole from the Father of Greatness the principle of the soul (Doresse, 1960: 60).

³⁰⁵ GRR Book III p. 96: 4 *ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ* “the pregnant became pregnant with the second”.

³⁰⁶ GRR book III p. 85: 14 f. The move of the Second Life ‘Yōšamin’ was encountered by the creation of the messenger/redeemer Manda d-Hiia “Gnosis of Life” (§2.2.7), by the higher deities as we shall see in GRR p. 85: 24 f. Cf. the second series of gods who pleaded their Father for a new emanation to set the cosmos in motion, according to the Manichaean system (Gardner and Lieu, 2004: 15). For more about *hapiqia mia* see §2.2.4.

³⁰⁷ DY (Mandaean manuscript) pp. 4, 5 (= Lidzbarski’s Mandaean manuscript p. 5: 3). The text:

ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ

³⁰⁸ Ibid p. 7. The text:

ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ ܠܗܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܐ

³⁰⁹ Rudolph, 1983: 69.

and theological transformation was the rehabilitation of fallen, cosmic priests such as Abatur, who were re-created in the image of the newly empowered human priests.³¹⁸

Yōšamin and his sons Abatur and Ptahil resemble, in a way, the sinning angels of I Enoch 6-11.³¹⁹ Deutsch explains:

The connection between the Mandaean uthras and the fallen angels is primarily, but not solely, based on their common fall from grace following an act of rebellion. Another important but less obvious parallel between the two sets of figures in that both are related to the image of a polluted priesthood. We have already seen that Yōšamin, Abatur, and Ptahil were characterized as heavenly priests who corrupted themselves by rebelling against the Great Life.³²⁰

In Mandaean prayer Yōšamin is the strength which guides the waters to the sea.³²¹ He is also mentioned in marriage songs as a light-spirit of abundance and fertility.³²² The First Life is anterior to the Second Life by six thousand myriad years and the Second Life is anterior to the Third Life by six thousand myriad years and the Third Life more ancient than any *uthra* by six thousand myriad years.³²³ He is the pure one who abides on treasures of the waters and upon mighty celestial wellsprings of light.³²⁴

In some Mandaean writings Yōšamin is called the peacock:

³¹⁸ Deustch 1999: 143.

³¹⁹ For more about the falling angels, see Hanson "Rebellion in Heaven", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (Jun., 1977), pp. 195-233; Nichelsburg G. W., "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6-11", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 96, No. 3. (Sep. 1977), pp. 383-405, and S. Bhayro, *The Shemihazah and Asael Narrative of 1 Enoch 6-11* (AOAT 322, Münster, 2005), 29ff.

³²⁰ Deutsch 1999: 130.

³²¹ ATŠ [236] p. 171.

³²² ŠQŠR pp. 67, 104.

³²³ CP, p. 1.

³²⁴ Ibid p. 7.

world 'matter'.³⁴⁸ It is as if Abutur was enchanted with darkness just like when the light became enamored of the image of light projected from Darkness in the Narcissus motif.³⁴⁹ In the doctrine of the Sabians of Harran we read a similar motif: "The soul, turned at one time, towards the matter: she fell in love with it, and burning with desire to experience bodily pleasure, wished no more to be separated from it. Thus the world was born."³⁵⁰ Theodore Bar-Konai's ³⁵¹ sums up the doctrine of the "Kukeans"³⁵², a sect which was already in existence in the middle of the fourth century:

They say that God was born from the sea situated in the World of Light, which they call the Awakened Sea; and this Sea of Light and the world are more ancient than God. [They also say] that when God was born of the awakened Sea, he seated himself above the waters, looked into them, and saw his own image. He held out his hand and took [this image] to be his companion, had relations with it and thus engendered a multiple of gods and goddesses. They called this the

manifests himself in different figures." He also writes: "The curious fact should be noted here that the technical term *pleroma* appears, somewhat deformed but still clearly recognizable, in the exact Hebrew translation, *ha-male'*, "the full" or "the fullness" (Scholem, 1962: 68 - 9). In Gnostic cosmology, the *Pleroma* is the shining spheres of the divinity with all its powers, the non material world, the dwelling place of the spirits, the archons and aeons (Doresse, 1958: 177). The Mandaean etymology for *pleroma* is ܡܠܝܬܐ *malaiia* "fullness" and ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܠܡܢܐ *malaiia dālma* "fullness of the world" (MD, p. 243) ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܠܡܢܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ *uhua mlaiia dālma* "he (Ur, the king of darkness) became the fullness of the world or: he became the *Pleroma* of the cosmos" (GRR p. 99: 4).

³⁴⁸ Deutsch, 1999: 20.

³⁴⁹ Jonas H., 1958: 161.

³⁵⁰ Doresse, 1960: 316.

³⁵¹ An eighth-century Nestorian heresiographer; a native of Kaškar in Beth 'Aramaye, Iraq (See Burkitt, "The Religion of the Manichees", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 2, No. 3, May, 1922, pp. 263-276 esp. p. 267). Theodore bar Konai wrote the "Scholia", which is of a great value for research because of its reports about the Mandaeans and Manicheans (Rudolph, 1983: 20. See also Wasserstrom, 1995: 42).

³⁵² Perhaps the Quqites; a special heretical school identified in Edessa in the Second Century A.D., (Rudolph, 1983: 327. See also Drijvers, H., *Numen* 14 (1967), pp. 104-129). On the other hand they might be the ܩܢܝܬܐ *qanaiia* in Mandaean, are "smiths" or "potters". According to Robert Eisler, bar Konai (bar Kevani) says, 'The *Dostai* (followers of Dositheus, who became the leader of the disciples of John the Baptist after his death) are called in Maisan Mandaeans, in Beth-Aramajē Našoraeans (*Našrāiā*). The "Cantaeans," quoted by Theodore as the precursors of the Mandaeans, who trace themselves to the Qenites, the group were also referred to as *Kaivītai*, *Kaiāoi* etc. in the Septuagint as KENAI OI, KINAI OI, KAINAI OI, etc. Eisler believes that Bar Konai use of 'k' instead of 'q' goes back to the Greek influence (Eisler 1931: 616).

Mother of Life, and said that she made seventy worlds and twelve
aeons.³⁵³

There are many parallels between Abatur and the similar heavenly beings in the above two tales, such as gazing into the water and seeing own image and becoming infatuated by it, and from this own image or coition with own image the cosmos (physical world) comes into being.³⁵⁴ This might lead us to the conclusion that the Gnostic sects, including the Mandaeans, must have shared relatively close motifs.

Abatur was possessed with his ego and became arrogant, “He conducted himself like the Great Ones and said, ‘I am the father of the uthras!’” ³⁵⁵ He abandoned the name which the Life gave him. He took no advice and did not perceive the turbid water and said, ‘I shall call forth a world!’ Abatur’s rebellion was punished sternly by the higher deities. He was dethroned and expelled from the world of Light and he was assigned as the “Weigher” and judge of the souls:

Then Hibil-Ziwa went and said to Abatur, 'Arise! set up your throne in the House of Boundaries and take over sovereignty. And sublimate that which is sound (good) from that which is base (lit. dregs) when Man's measure is full and he comes and is baptized in your Jordan, is weighed in your Scales, is sealed with your seal and rises up and dwells in your world.'³⁵⁶

³⁵³ Doresse, 1960: 58.

³⁵⁴ For the Narcissus motif, see Jonas, 1958: 161 ff.

355 GRR book 3 p. 111: 14.

³⁵⁶ DA p. 1, The Mandaean Diwan (Scroll) of Abatur line 8. Drower's translation, text collated:

[illegible]

§ 2. 2. 5. 2 - Abatur in the Incantations:

Abatur was invoked, along with other Mandaean deities, in few Mandaic incantations, such as in Lidzbarski's lead amulet from the third or fourth century A.D and published in 1909. He is invoked in this particular amulet to strengthen the knot³⁵⁷ of the house of a certain *Per Nukraia* son of *Abandukt* and to help him against evil doings of the planets.³⁵⁸ Bhaq (another name of Abatur)³⁵⁹ was conjured in bowl C (9931.4.1) to crush the power and the secret spells of Rūha against the client *Duktan Purk*, daughter of *Bzurgunatai*.³⁶⁰

Nathaniel Deutsch attempted to establish some resemblances between the Mandaic Abatur and the Jewish Metatron and to draw the attention to the "Mandaic awareness of Jewish angelological tradition in general and of Metatron in particular is supported by the evidence of the magic bowls." ³⁶¹ In this respect Wasserstrom has written: "Metatron remained alive in Mandaen magic for perhaps over a millennium."³⁶² Metatron (MYṬṬRWN) appears in one of the Mandaic incantations bowls (McCullough D) in which he was adjured, "In the name of Metatron HLDH who serves before the Curtain and who has compassion upon the countryside; he conjures the hundreds of fierce angels of Halahkin, who has sweetened meat for eating and wine for drinking." McCullough suggests that the writer of this incantation was

³⁵⁷ "Those (feminine) who blow on knots." النفاثات في العقد (Quran, Al-Falaq n. 113). Knot sorcery was a favorite form of witchcraft, practiced in Arabia at the time of Mohammed, either to prevent evil against the client, or afflict harm on the foe. The knot is used as a powerful weapon against the forces of Darkness. The Redeemer Mnada ḏ-Hiia says: "I wrapped his (the King of Darkness') navel with a veil, and tied a knot around his heart" (GRR, p. 101: 2. See also Yamauchi, 1967: 60).

³⁵⁸ Yamauchi 1967, text 22: 244, p. 253.

³⁵⁹ GRR, book III, p. 111:12.

³⁶⁰ McCullough, 1967: 15.

³⁶¹ Deutsch, N., 1999: 95. He also writes: "Metatron is not the only angelic being shared by the Mandaeans and Jews. Gabriel was also adopted by Mandaeans and played an important role as a demiurge figure in one version of the Mandaean cosmogony" (Ibid 96).

³⁶² Wasserstrom, S., 1995: 191 n. 98.

When Abatur said this, the King became full of anger and released a call into the world.³⁷⁵

Hence, Abatur took his case to the Pure Mana and asked him the reason he was chosen to the task of the Weigher of souls out of the other *uthras*:

Then Abatur spoke said to the pure Mana, ‘Why have you sent me from out of all these numerous *uthras*?’³⁷⁶

The Mana told Abatur why he was chosen for this task and comforted him:

Out of all the *škinas* and *uthras* there is none as you are. None in all these light worlds would be as gentle as you. You are gentle and you are suitable *uthra*. You are generous and are to the souls as a support. You feel sympathy with the souls and you are an acceptable judge.³⁷⁷

§ 2. 2. 5. 4 - Abatur; the Persian *Rašn uRast* رشن و راست

Abatur can be associated with Rašnu the Persian god of justice and last judgement and the personification of righteousness. He was said to weigh the deeds of the soul during the three day period of evaluation following the death of an individual. Rašnu guards the Chinvat Bridge leading to heaven. He carries the golden scales with which he weighs the souls at Judgement.³⁷⁸ Peculiarly, the Mandaeans' holy book *Ginza Rba* identifies Abatur with Rašnu:

³⁷⁵ DY, p. 242: 9. The text:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

³⁷⁶ DY, p. 243: 12. The text:

[illegible]

³⁷⁷ The Mandaean BJ p. 243: 14. The text:

[illegible]

³⁷⁸ Zaehner, R. C., 1961: 56. See also MII n. 4 p. 95.

And when you take the iron knife into your hand, you have placed Pthail's hand into Abatur's hand with (your) right hand. And when you take the sheep or the dove, and turn your face towards the Gate of Payer (the North) Abatur-of-the-Scales gazes upon you.³⁹⁷

Also:

And when you signed (at) 'the House of Abatur, you cloth the soul in the seven vestures of Abatur. And when you say 'You shall go and reach "the guard-house of four beings, sons of perfection" those are the four handclasps (*kuštas*) which Abatur seeks to exchange with the soul.³⁹⁸

The word 'uthras refer to the *ganziuri* (archbishops), just as *malkia* ('kings') means "priests".³⁹⁹ Since Abatur is the King of the *škinas*,⁴⁰⁰ he is considered a heavenly Ganzibra (archbishop) in the Mandaean belief. The crown of priesthood is the 'crown of intermediation between the worlds of light and those of matter'.⁴⁰¹ Kurt Rudolph stated, "Out of celestial beings come types of celestial priests; the erring and rehabilitated priest is an especially favourite theme of this kind."⁴⁰²

§ 2. 2. 5. 7 - Abatur; the Divine Secretary:

Abatur is the heavenly being who is entitled to send ܥܪܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ 'ngirtia letters (secret messages)⁴⁰³ to the lower worlds carrying certain instructions and

³⁹⁷ ARZ p. 57 line 35.

³⁹⁸ CP. P. 224.

³⁹⁹ Ibid 226 n. 7.

⁴⁰⁰ DY (Lidzbarski's manuscript), p. 261.

⁴⁰¹ SA p. 26.

⁴⁰² Rudolph, 1969 233-234.

⁴⁰³ 'ngirta: ܥܪܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ letter (MD p. 353). The term is also applied to a rite performed to the dying. The only outgoing 'ngirta from this world to the world of light is few drops of *miša* (sesame oil) transformed into a small bottle and then the bottle is sealed with clay and marked with the impression of the priestly ring (*šom yawar*) and the ganzibra's to-be finger nail. After reading some secret prayers the small bottle is inserted into a pocket in the dying person's *rasta* (official garment. (MII p. 170) The priest recites, 'In the name of the Life. A sealed letter written in good-faith (*kušta*) and sealed with the seal of the Mighty (Life) - Righteous men wrote it, believing men tied on it, and suspended it about the soul's neck and despatched to the Gate of Life (CP p. 61). The 'ngirta (letter) serves as a kind of passport for the soul which is examined by *rab maksia* (the chief customs official) and the *šahardal* (P. ܫܗܪܕܐܪ = governor, MD p. 439) and make sure of its seal, and then let the soul pass over the *hapiqia mia* (streams

commandments. He also receives the letters, which are sent by the priests, with the souls after death. A good example of the commandments sent to the lower world is written in the Mandaean Book of John (*Draša d-Yahia*). It was sent to John the Baptist when he refused to baptise ܝܫܘܥ 'išo (Jesus) because he was suspicious that Jesus will pervert the Law. After some lengthy arguments with Jesus, John the Baptist receives 'ngirta, a mandate, from the House of Abatur instructing John the Baptist to baptise Jesus:

When 'išu mšiha (Jesus Christ) said this, there came a Letter out of the House of Abatur: 'Yahia, baptize the deceiver in Jordan. Lead him down into the Jordan and baptize him, and lead him up again to the shore, and there set him. Then Rūha made herself like to a dove and threw a cross over the Jordan. A cross she threw over the Jordan and made its water to change into various colours. "O Jordan" she says, "you sanctified me and sanctified my seven sons."⁴⁰⁴

§ 2.2.6 - The Fourth Life ܡܫܝܗܐ Ptahil:

§ 2.2.6.1 - Ptahil; A Mandaean 'Uthra or Egyptian Demiurge?

Ptahil (the Fourth Life) is the son of Bhaq-Ziwa (Abatur; the Third Life) who begot him when he opened the gate of the World of Light and gazed into the black waters.⁴⁰⁵ As soon as he beheld him, Bhaq-Ziwa (Abatur) summoned Ptahil-Utra,

of water) to the house of Life. The 'ngirta (letter) process is well known in Mesopotamia as a legal act, and goes back at least as far as the Old Babylonian period and extends through the Neo-Babylonian period into the Seleucid era (See Greenfield J. C., *A Mandaic Miscellany*, JAOS 104. 1 (1984) pp. 81-85 esp. p. 82).

⁴⁰⁴ Mead, 1924: 51. DY, p. 103.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. 'The Father of Light who sees his image in the water of pure light . . . One gains the impression regarding the Spirit of God who brooded over the face of the waters as related in Gen. 1: 2b.' (Drijvers, *Numen*, vol. 14, (1967), pp. 104-129, esp. p. 118). The idea, in most of

Ptahil is the formation of Ptah (the Egyptian god) and El, and not from the word 'to open'.⁴¹¹ In this respect Cyrus Gordon wrote: "Ptahil is composed of the Egyptian "Ptah" + Semitic "Il" and it would highlight the Egyptian component in Mandaeism as well as indicate that the name is Egypto-Semitic (signifying "Eg. Ptah = El/God")."⁴¹² Widengren ascribes the difficulty in defining Ptahil to the fact that "god" is usually written ܥܝܠ,⁴¹³ but Widengren was not aware that the guttural (ܥ) occurs in Mandaic incantations in the name ܡܬܚܝܠ Ptah'il.⁴¹⁴ It seems that the guttural ܥ is assimilated in some Mandaean names such as ܡܢܕܐ ܕܗܝܝܐ *Manda d-Hiia* instead of ܡܢܕܥܐ ܕܗܝܝܐ *Mand'a d-Hiia*.⁴¹⁵

Lidzbarski also connects this demiurge with the Egyptian creator-god Ptah.⁴¹⁶ Kraeling shares Lidzbarski's opinion and adds, 'pth to 'open' came to be used in the sense of 'create' but he believes that the name is not essentially Aramaic but a combination of *ptah* and 'il. He also refers to Bousset's argument which suggests that "the Mandaean Ptahil is in fact none other than the Iranian *Yima*. In support of this identification he adduces the observation that both Ptahil and *Yima* enter into relation with evil powers (*daevas*)⁴¹⁷, and that both experience a fall from grace by reason of this relationship."⁴¹⁸ Eisler points out that he finds in the angelology of the Mandaeans the remarkable

⁴¹¹ Yamauchi, 1967: 63. *pth*: create, also *pth* n. div. Ptah. (Faulkner R. O., *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford (2002), p.96).

⁴¹² Gordon, (Reviewed Work) JAOS, vol. 99, No. 3, 1979: 476.

⁴¹³ Widengren, 1950: 59 n. 1.

⁴¹⁴ Yamauchi, 1967: 253 line 245, (text 22, Lidzbarski's translation, 1909).

⁴¹⁵ Yamauchi, 1967: 235, 251. However, there is no evidence to support either Gordon's or Yamauchi's identification Ptahil with the Egyptian god Ptah.

⁴¹⁶ Lidzbarski, JB, pp. xxvii, xxviii.

⁴¹⁷ He (Ptahil) is the *melka* who rules the ܫܒܝܗܝܐ *šibiahia* (the Seven Planets =demons) (see MII n. 5 p. 95).

⁴¹⁸ Kraeling, 1933: 152-165. *yima* is the "god who is supposed to dwell beneath the earth". For more details about *yima* see Boyce 1975: 94. See also Zaehner 1955: 251, where *yima* saves man from the demons.

interpretation of Ptah-il, i.e. the old Egyptian or Canaanite god of smithies and metal-engravers, as the creator of heaven as well as of mankind.⁴¹⁹ What emphasizes Eisler assumption is that the Ginza describes Ptahil (Gabriel) as skillful (creator) as the Greek:

And Gabriel, the messenger, is called into being, (then) he will be instructed to create the world. He will arrive and condense a condensation, and create the earth (skillfully) as the Greeks.⁴²⁰

There is a possible parallel proposed between the Mandaean Ptahil and the Egyptian god Ptah. Mercer noted that *'pth* sounds like the Hebrew פתח "to open" and that Ptah played an important role in the famous Egyptian ceremony of the "Opening of the Mouth", which resembles similar ceremony in the ancient Babylonia, designated to initiate an idol.⁴²¹ He also came up a very unlikely assumption when he stated: "it is neither impossible, nor even improbable, that the earliest worshippers of Ptah might have been Semites who made their way into Egypt, as others did before them and led by the god whom the called "the opener of the way"⁴²² The rite of the "mouth opening" was part of the old lustration rites performed in Mesopotamia since the Third Dynasty of Ur.⁴²³ Jonas also had no doubt that the name Ptahil, the Mandaean Demiurge, was taken from the Egyptian pantheon and "is connected with

⁴¹⁹ Eisler, 1931: 235. He makes this statement depending on the fact that the Naṣōraeans (early Mandaeans) or the "keepers" of secrets are craftsmen in general (smiths, carpenters and boat-builders etc). For Ptah the Egyptian chief god of all handicraftsmen (see Budge, 1904: 500 ff.).

⁴²⁰ GRR, book III p. 104: 17.

⁴²¹ For more details about the rite "Opening of the Mouth" see Blackman, "The Rite of Opening the Mouth in ancient Egypt and Babylonia", JEA, vol. 10 (1924), pp. 47-59.

⁴²² Mercer, 1949: 148-9. The Mandaean myth tells us that Egypt was their first dwelling and from there they migrated to *ṭura ḡ-madai* the Mountain of the Mandai (MII p. 10). Until recently a *masiqta* (ascension of the soul) ritual was performed for the Egyptians drowned while chasing Moses and the Jews across the *yama ḡ-suf* "the Red Sea" (SA p. xv and n. 2 p. xv).

⁴²³ Jacobsen, 1976: 124. Lady Drower noted that "Nöldke suggests a connection between the Mandaean sacramental "wafer" (*pihta*), and the Babylonian rites of *pit pī* ("opening of the mouth") and *mis pī* ("washing of the mouth")" (MII n. 15, p. 122).

the symbolic role of Egypt as the representative of the material world.”⁴²⁴ On the other hand, Deutsch believes that there are considerable parallels between Abatur (Ptahil's father) and Sabaoth.⁴²⁵ Both of them are enthroned on the gate of the World of Light and each one of them is related to the demiurge of the physical world: Abatur created Ptahil and Sabaoth created a host of angelic beings.⁴²⁶

It is worthwhile to note that all sources mentioned above represent poor scholarship and assumptions based on very insufficient evidence. Therefore, Ptahil remains a very general name type, which doesn't really tell us anything of significance about him. This is one of the many reasons why Cyrus Gordon highlighted the significance of serious researches to be conducted on Mandaism when he wrote:

“Mandaic should be studied in depth by several circles of scholars, of whom the Gnostics are only one. To single out one of the many other fields: Mandaic is probably the most valuable aid for the study of the Babylonian Talmud.”⁴²⁷

§ 2.2.6. 2. - Ptahil; the Creator of the Material World:

Ptahil is the Mandaean demiurge who created the physical world. He received a mandate from his father, the Second Life (Abatur) commanding him to leave the “World Beyond” and descend “below” to the “place where there is no *škinas* or worlds” to create a world and *uthras* for himself like the “sons of perfection”.⁴²⁸ In another passage of the *Ginza* we read: “Abatur instructed him (Ptahil) and said,

⁴²⁴ Jonas 1958: 98.

⁴²⁵ Lord of Hosts (Isa. 1.9).

⁴²⁶ Deutsch, 1999: 129.

⁴²⁷ Gordon, JAOS, vol. 99, No. 3, 1979: 476.

⁴²⁸ GRR, pp. 111, 112. Wilson defines the demiurge as: “god or father of all outside the Pleroma, the creator of all things psychic and hylic. He separated the two confused substances, and created things heavenly and earthly, heavy and light, higher and lower. He formed seven heavens, whence he is called the Hebdomad as their ruler, Achamoth being of the Ogdoad, recalling the archetypal Ogdoad of the Pleroma” (Wilson, 1958: 131).

“Arise, my son, condense a condensation in the black water.”⁴²⁹ But the Father of the Uthras (Abatur) forgot to instruct him against the odds neither equipped him with suitable means.⁴³⁰ Ptahil descended below the *škinas*, towards the “place where there was no world”. He waded in the in the filthy mud and turbid waters, but no solidification took place. He waded to his knees, to his thighs, but the waters did not solidify. Up to his first mouth (anus), up to his mouth, he stood in the water, but no solidification took place. He pronounced the name of the Life and the name of Manda *ḏ-Hiia* (the Gnosis of Life) and nothing happened. He cast some of the seven garments of radiance, light and glory upon the waters, but the waters remained fluid.⁴³¹

When he sensed that the “living fire” in him changed, Ptahil engrossed in thought and decided to ascend to the Great (One) to receive the garment of the Living Flame.⁴³² In another passage of the Ginza, Ptahil descended to the world of his father Abatur and spoke to him, “My father, I took some of those seven garments, in which I was planted, and I entered the waters, but no earth was condensed. Then his father said to him, “O (you) *sakla*⁴³³ (fool)! Take care that you do not put your self on a par with me. Take some of the seven garments of radiance, light and glory with which I

⁴²⁹ Ibid 196: 8. In the scroll of Diwan Abatur, we read another version: “Abatur spoke to Ptahil and said to him, “Go, condense a condensation, and create the worlds and create creatures. And take with you three hundred and sixty thousand demons and devils that they dig out the Light-Euphrates and heap up its two banks. Then make a world and create creatures and plant plants. Go and propagate thy world and take the demon *Qardum* who loosens, liberates and waters the plants” (DA, p. 11).

⁴³⁰ GRR, p. 112.

⁴³¹ GRR, p.413: 5.

⁴³² GRR, p. 112.

⁴³³ *سكلا* *sakla* (fool) an epithet of the Gnostic demiurge Ialdabaoth (child of the void) or Samael (the blind god). It seems that different Gnostic confraternities used the term *sakla* to refer to the demiurge. The Gnostics consider themselves ‘to be ‘strangers,’ exiled in the kingdom of *Sakla*, “the prince of darkness” (Deutsch 1999: 75 and Stroumsa 1984: 48, 120) For *Sakla*, the leader of the Fallen Angels, see Stroumsa 1984: 163. For Ialdabaoth, the *Saklas* who appoints seven kings over the seven heavens and five over the “chaos of the underworld” (Rudolph 1977: 79). The *Saklas* join the powers of Darkness to create Adam and Eve in order to entrap the elements of Light in the world through lust and the multiplication of humans (Stoyanov 2000: 110).

fist and beat with his wings (arms), that he might grumble and shake himself, and that he might be spring up and stand on his feet...

The Planets spoke to Ptahil saying: 'Allow us to cast into him some the *rūha* spirit which you brought with you from your father's house.' All the Planets exerted themselves, and the Lord of the World exerted himself. In spite of all their efforts, they could not make him stand on his feet. Ptahil set off in his glory and ascended to the Place of Light. He stood in the presence of the Father of the Uthra,⁴⁵⁰ and his father spoke to him: "What have you accomplished?" He answered him: "All that I made has been successful, (but) my counterpart and yours have not been successful."⁴⁵¹

The Father of the *uthras* raised himself, set forth, and hurried to *atar kasia* the secret place. He fetched the (great) *mana*,⁴⁵² which illuminates all corruption. He wrapped him (the *mana*) in his pure turban under the (spells) of the (secret) names which the Life gave him. He brought it hither and gave it to Ptahil, his son. When he gave it to Ptahil-Uthra, the Life summoned Hibil, Šitil and Anoš⁴⁵³ the outstanding *uthras* who are flawless. He summoned them and gave them their orders, and warned them concerning the *nišmata* souls. He said to them: 'You be a guardian over them, so that all the worlds may know nothing about them. Let not the muddle-headed Ptahil know,⁴⁵⁴ how the *nišimta* soul falls into the body. How the soul falls into the body and how the blood fills (lit: speak in) it and how the veins permeate it. Let the supporter (*maulānā*) Adakas-Mana be his

⁴⁵⁰ Bhaq-Ziwa (Abatur).

⁴⁵¹ Cf. The creation of Adam in Nag Hammadi Codices. It is written that "the Archigenetor issues a decree with regard to that man to be formed, and each of the powers cast his seed upon the midst of the navel of the earth. From that day on the seven commanders (archons) formed the man and he was called "Adam". But this creature was left without a soul for forty days until "wisdom life" (*sophia zoē*) sent her breath into Adam. He began to move on earth but could not stand up.' (Rudolph 1983: 96-97) Drower noted that the unsuccessful creation of Adam "constantly appear in Gnostic, Rabbinic, and Kabalistic writings" (SA, n., 3 p. 35).

⁴⁵² *mana*: soul (MD p. 246).

⁴⁵³ The triad of *uthras* produced by Hawa-Kasia (the secret Eve), and act as "saviours" in the Mandaean literature (SA p. 36).

⁴⁵⁴ For Ptahil "sakla" or "blila" the fool, see above §2.2.6.2.

protector.⁴⁵⁵ . . . Ptahil wrapped him in his pure turban, and enfolded him in his garment. When Ptahil wanted to cast the soul into Adam's trunk, I (Manda d-Hiia) snatched it from his pocket. While Ptahil lifted Adam up, I erected him on his bones. While he laid his hands on him, I made him breathe the breath of the Great Ones. His body filled with marrow, and the radiance of the Life spoke in him. When the radiance of the Life spoke in him, Adakas-Ziwa ascended to his place.⁴⁵⁶ I led him upwards to the House of the Great Ones; to the place where the Great One is enthroned. I entrusted him to the *ganzibras* Treasurers, the *uthras* who look after the Jordans. The Life thanked the *uthra*, who had brought the *nišimta* soul.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵Adakas-Mana the light being who came from the hidden place and fell into Adam and his wife Hawa (Eve), and made them stand on their feet, opened their eyes to behold and opened their mouths to feed. GRR 290: 6f. The text:

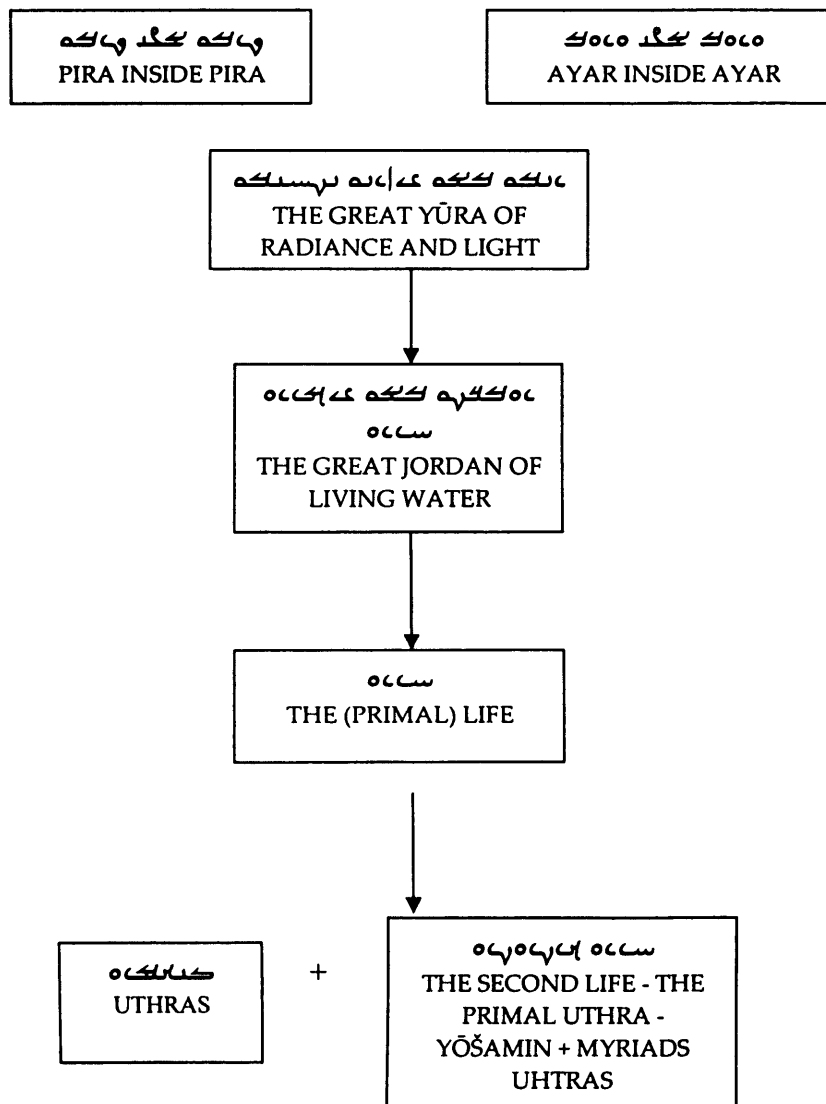
Surprisingly the word *maulānā* occurs in an Isma'li text called *Kalām-i-Pir*. According to this text, "the divinity *maulānā* (our Lord) manifested itself in each generation in the most perfect human form" (Stroumsa, 1984: 111).

⁴⁵⁶ Adakas-Ziwa is the Light-Adam. "He is the macrocosm conceived not only as an Idea but as an Ideal. Adakas is Adam the microcosm's guardian, his soul, his *mana*." (SA p. 35). Adakas is also Adam's instructor who came from the "Secret Place" (Ibid p. 102).

457 GRR p. 120 ff.

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TEXT 2
GINZA RABA
PAGE 84
(Chart B)



§ 2.2.7 - Manda d-Hiia (Gnosis of Life)

§ 2.2.7.1 - The True Apostle of Light:

Manda d-Hiia is translated “knowledge of life”, i. e. “gnosis”. There was a debate on his name and the analogy of “manda” led by Pallis, since “knowledge” in the Mandaean language is ܡܕܝܬܐ *madita*, ܝܕܘܬܐ *iaduta*, ܡܕܕܐ *madda* or ܡܕܝܬܐ *madihta*.⁴⁵⁸ Manda d-Hiia is the outstanding figure in the Mandaean faith and the most revered deity.⁴⁵⁹ Manda d-Hiia personifies the ܡܕܝܬܐ *manda* “knowledge” of the great Mandaean deity ܡܕܝܬܐ *hiia* the Life.⁴⁶⁰ From the course which the Mandaeans followed through history, some scholars went to assume that this sect adopted Manda d-Hiia as a messenger and a redeemer when the Naṣōraeans (the early Mandaeans) as part of their polemic against Christianity at the rise of the first millennium.⁴⁶¹ Many texts in the Ginza and in the other Mandaean manuscripts propose a shift from polytheism to Gnosticism has taken place sometime in the period from C.E. 300-600 as suggested by Brandt.⁴⁶²

Support for this hypothesis comes from one of the *masiqta* (ascension) hymns; the believers have forsaken images, pictures, idols and gods and have testified to the name of the great strange Life:

⁴⁵⁸ In some incantations Manda d-Hiia is written with the guttural (ܡ ܝ) ܡܕܝܬܐ ܡܕܝܬܐ *Mand'a d-Hiia* (Yamauchi 1967: 235, 241).

⁴⁵⁹ Pallis 1926: 146. Abatur (the Second Life) rises from his throne in order to show respect to Manda d-Hiia (GRR 223: 14).

⁴⁶⁰ Rudolph 1983, 131.

⁴⁶¹ Brandt believed of two schools of Mandaeism: the Old Mandaean School, which lost its authority because of continually new influence especially Christianity; and the New School which he called “teaching of the king of Light” (*Lichtkönigslehre*). This school, he believes, in contrast to the older polytheistic form, is monotheistically oriented, even when marked with dualism. Brandt came to the conclusion that “In the course of the polemic against Christianity and its influence, the “reformer” of the Mandaean theology”, the author of the *Lichtkönigslehre* represented a revelational activity of the Mandaean redeemer in Jerusalem and assumed also the name Naṣōraean as a designation for the sect itself” (cited by Rudolph, HR, vol. 8, 1969: 211f).

⁴⁶² Rudolph, HR, 1969: 212.

Manda d-Hiia arrives at the house of Yōšamin and the planets fell on their faces:

After all, it seems that everything went well and Manda d-Hiia was successful in his mission to Yōšmain and he could achieve his goal in a perfect way:

⁵⁰⁹ GRR, book 14, p. 356: 17 f. For the detailed battles between Yōšamin and the battalions of Light see the first four chapters of the Book of John. The text:

⁵¹⁰ GRR book 15: 16, p.426: 12. The text:

151

I uttered a proclamation,
and I straightened up the trivial devils.⁵¹¹

What caused Darkness to mount up its offence against the World of Light is the envious nature of darkness which is full of hatred and conflict.⁵¹⁵

515 Jonas stated that the "Darkness had first to reach its own outer limits, and to these it was pushed at some time in the course of the internal warfare in which the destructive passion of

saw the arrogant King of Darkness challenging whoever claims that he was stronger than him.⁵¹⁹

§ 2.2.7.5.4 - Mandada d-Hiia's Battle with the King of Darkness ('Ur)⁵²⁰:

When the Leviathan of the World of Darkness decided to swallow the world in order to cast down the Great Ones from their thrones, Manda d-Hiia appeared to him in the extensive *lbuša* garment of the Great Ones *dnpiš umitar mn almea* "which was more immense and surpassing from the worlds".⁵²¹ Manda d-Hiia showed him *margina d̄mia hiia* the staff of Living Water,⁵²² by which the rebels were crushed down. He showed him *klil išata haita*, "the crown of the living fire", which instilled terror into demons. The King of Darkness rose up and annihilated the whole world; he contained it with his strength and *upalga dpumh ubarqa qbar* buried half of his mouth in the earth. He swallowed the black waters and gulped down all the demons and *dewis* and *liliths* and stood *riqan* "empty" (or: "naked") in the world. Manda d-Hiia approached the monster armed with strength of the Great One and some of his breath reached his garment, but the burning flame of the King of Darkness was extinguished and his navel fell upon the gate (lit: artery) of darkness and all darkness

⁵¹⁹ GRR p. 97.

⁵²⁰ Lady Drower was told by the Mandaean priests, during her meetings with them in Iraq, that "Ur is the mighty Serpent or dragon of the underworld upon whom the material world rests. Above him are the seven material firmament and below him the seven underworlds of darkness. He has fiery breath like a flame, and his belly is alternately fire and ice. Souls too impure to undergo the lighter purification of *maṭarata* (purgatory) are drawn into his belly, and amongst these are unbelievers" (MII p. 253, n. 3).

⁵²¹ The garment has secret powers against the enemies and confers superior power on the wearer and therefore it is a weapon. The garment of Manda d-Hiia has such magic powers that he could, with his other weapons, subdue the powers of Darkness Zaehner 1955: 118.

⁵²² Cf. the cedar staff 'the darling of the great gods' in the old Mesopotamian legends. The staff is the 'symbol of Life' and the sign of kingship which contains magical powers. (Widengren 1950: 8, 9). The Assyrians called the staff '*kakku*' a weapon which is considered as divine symbol at the same time (Chicago Assyrian Dict., p. 50).

was formed from him. Manda d-Hiia seized his eyes and wrapped him with four shawls. He fettered the Evil's heart, dissolved his joints and crushed his liver. He folded his stomach with his bowels, wrapped his navel with a veil, tied a knot around his heart and cast poison in his entrails. He bound the King of Darkness with a fetter and put a muzzle on his mouth. The King of Darkness became tongue tied and retreated to his *kanna* place crying, "Alas, alas onto myself!"⁵²³ Manda d-Hiia did not pay attention to the Evil's begging to forgive him and have mercy on him; instead he imprisoned him in his place and appointed rude giant guards to watch over him.⁵²⁴

When the King of Darkness tried to get rid of his fetters, Manda d-Hiia rose by the powers of the Life and created an iron wall around him. He tied seven knots around him and wrapped him with twelve veils. He bound him with the great voice and fettered him with a fetter so the seven *zahriria* flashes (or: flames) departed him. He flung his club and struck him and split his head. He made him shriek like a woman and made him weep like a child. He made dung into his food and urine into his drink and extinguished his devouring and destroying fire. He deprived him from his lust (or: greed) and clothed him with wrath. When Manda d-Hiia was triumphed he erected a throne for the good ones and set up a glamorous light beside it.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ GRR p. 98 ff.

⁵²⁴ GRR. P. 102.

⁵²⁵ GRR p. 108.

§ 2.2.7.5.5 - Mandada d-Hiia Thwarts Rūha's Plans to Seduce Adam:

Rūha⁵²⁶ and her retinue, the planets and the demons, began forging plans to capture Adam and keep him in their world: "We will entrap and catch Adam and detain him with us in the world!" ⁵²⁷ They planned to entrap him with horns and flutes and draw him into their congregation.⁵²⁸ They proposed to arrange a feast and practice *razia drhamta* the "secrets of love", Rūha and her party went up the Mount Carmel and set up their assembly and began practicing the secrets of love and said: "We will perform the secret of love with myrtle and entrap the whole world. We will perform the mystery of love with wine and entrap the world by our drunkenness. We will perform the mystery of love with drinking water." ⁵²⁹ They took the living water and poured turbid water into it. They took the head of the tribe and practiced on him the mystery of love and of lust, through which all the worlds are inflamed. They practiced on him seduction, by which all the worlds are seduced. They practiced on him the mystery of drunkenness, by which all the worlds are made drunken. The worlds are made drunk by it and turn their faces to the sea of Sup.⁵³⁰

Adam, the son of Adam, was inflicted with *hasiruta* "blunder" and his eyes found no sleep. He left his mother, *Hawa* (Eve) and turned his back to his brothers

⁵²⁶ Rūha, the queen of Darkness (see §2.3.9).

⁵²⁷ GRR p. 124: 21 f.

⁵²⁸ GRR p. 125: 6 f.

⁵²⁹ GRR p. 130

⁵³⁰ GRR p. 132. The terms "drunkenness" and "intoxication" in Gnosticism refer to "ignorance" which is apposed by "sobriety" and "knowledge". Jonas believes that the term "intoxication" requires a special comment. He writes, "The 'drunkenness' of the world is a phenomenon peculiarly characteristic of the spiritual aspect of what the Gnostics understand by the term 'world'. It is induced by the 'wine of ignorance' which the world everywhere proffers to man." He adds, "the ignorance of drunkenness is the soul's ignorance of itself, its origin and its situation in the alien world." To support this case, he cited the following from the Odes of Solomon XI. 6-8: "From the Lord's spring came speaking water in abundance to my lips. I drank and was drunken with the water of everlasting life, yet my drunkenness was not that of ignorance, but I turned away from vanity" (Jonas 1958: 71f.). *ܝܡܐ ܪܒܐ ܕܠܝܗܐ* *iama rba d-sup* (often) the Great Ocean of destruction (MD, p. 323).

while they were asleep. He climbed the walls of the fortress and headed towards the Rūha's assembly. Rūha welcomed him warmly and she laughed, gladdened and became rejoiced and all the Planets started to serve him.⁵³¹ They offered him a drink, once, twice, and three times until he was intoxicated and his body desired dance. Then Rūha took him by the hand *unapšh šalth zaniuta* "and he desired to fornicate with her".⁵³²

When he held her and kissed her and was about to sleep with her, Manda d-Hiia appeared to him in a cloud of radiance. He made Adam hear an overwhelming voice and made his heart fall from its support. He undid the spells of Rūha and Adam felt ashamed.⁵³³ Manda d-Hiia shone in his pure garment and took away the secrets of Rūha and her party. He revealed their mysteries, discredited their speech and belied their oaths. He threw Rūha off her throne and held her back with a camel-bridle. He threw her down, struck her with his scourge and split her head open. He bound her and tied her up to the heart of heavens.⁵³⁴ He grasped Šamiš⁵³⁵ by the secret things (genitals) and made him like a woman. He made Yorba a sissy and struck Sin with his scourge. He seized *kukba biša* the evil planet and hurled him down.⁵³⁶ He struck Bel (Jupiter) and removed the crown from his head. He smote Nirig (Mars) with his mace

⁵³¹ GRR, p. 136.

⁵³² GRR, p. 137.

⁵³³ GRR, p. 138.

⁵³⁴ GRR, p. 139.

⁵³⁵ Šamiš, Akk. šamšu(m) sun-god, sun (A Concise Dict. of Akk., p. 354), Aram שמשא Masc., Ar. شمس Fem. (see also MD, p. 443). In one of the Mandaic incantations, Šamaš is described as the "Blind One who is over the spheres, and Lame One who is over the chariots" Yamauchi 1967: 243, text 22: 131-133).

⁵³⁶ *kukba biša*: an evil star. כוכבא בישא Mercury in the Jewish literature. Lidzbarski stated: "Man beachte, daß כוכבא in der jüdischen Literatur schlechthin den Merkur bezeichnet" (Lidzbarski, Ginza, 1925: n. 10 p. 132).

and amputated his limbs. He dealt with the planets who became arrogant towards the family of Life and exposed their follies to world.⁵³⁷

§ 2.2.7.6 - The Life Praises Manda d-Hiia for his Victory:

The Life thanked Manda d-Hiia for his distinguished triumph over the King of Darkness and the other forces of Darkness and bestowed on him more glory than ever before. The Life hailed the strength and courage of the heavenly warrior who could valiantly defeat the devouring fire:

The Life thanked me, and gave me more radiance (or: glory) and spoke to me, “*Kušta* preserves you, good one, and preserve the word you have spoken.” The Life spoke blissfully to the *uthras* and said: “Hail the strength of the man who could cure the water with fire. Hail the strength of the man against whom the fire sinned not.” The *Uthra* shone with his radiance, and trod out a path for the perfect ones and rewarded them fully.⁵³⁸

“At the end of the ceremony”, the Life embraced and kissed the Uthra, and handed him the ‘*Kušta*’ like the great ones. Once again the Life and the rest of the *uthras* praised Manda d-Hiia for his achievement by hailing him: *abad ukašar qruia l’uthra d’kul dtibad tikšar* “He acted and seceded!” they hailed him, “Whatever you do you shall succeed!”⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ GRR pp. 140,141. Both narrations of Manda d-Hiia’s triumph over the powers of darkness hold traces of similar myths such as the Ugaritic myth of Baal who crushed Lotan, the swift serpent. The King of Darkness (‘Ur) who was defeated by Manda d-Hiia is similar to Leviathan, the monster, which was defeated by Yahweh at creation (Isaiah 27: 1) (Ringgren 1973: 149). Many resemblances are also found in the epic of Marduk’s triumph over Tiamat (Jacobsen 1976: 175 ff.).

⁵³⁸ GRR p. 109: 10 f. Cf. the Ugaritic message from Mot to Baal praising Baal’s triumph over the seven-headed serpent “Lotan” (Ringgren 1973: 148-9).

⁵³⁹ GRR 109: 21 f.

§ 2.2.7.8 - Manda d-Hiia, the Conjugal Advisor:

When Ptahil, with the help of Rūha and her retinue the Planets, finished creating Adam and Eve, Manda d-Hiia approached Adam in a corporeal form lest not to frighten him. He sat beside Adam and sprinkled the splendor of the Great Mana over him. Manda d-Hiia began to instruct him, with a sublime voice, and awakened his heart from his sleep.⁵⁴⁰

Manda d-Hiia thwarted the evil goals of the demons who intended to draw Adam to their congregation and destroyed their evil plans against him. Manda d-Hiia and the other *uthras* arranged a great wedding for Adam, in which they recited hymns and liturgies. They disgraced the words of Rūha and suppressed her seditious call. They eliminated the evil of the Planets and brought all the monsters to naught. Manda d-Hiia and his company of the *uthras* set up the root of life, and the Life triumphed and brought victory to Adam's race. They remained with Adam until Hawa (Eve) was in labour. Manda d-Hiia played the part of *sabus 'nšia* (conjugal instructor?) who instructed Adam how to marry a woman. Manda d-Hiia said: "Let the race of the Life be bountiful! The race of the Life will be bountiful, and from them the world will come to life. The world will come to life from them, and the Life will show them his gratitude, deliver them, and raise them from this world of the evil ones."⁵⁴¹

Manda d-Hiia established Adam on top of the building like the great ones, and made Hawa (Eve) in the shape of the cloud of light. Manda d-Hiia appointed *uthras*

⁵⁴⁰ in DY we read: "they created a messenger and sent him to the head of generation. He called out into the unrest of the world. Adam, who was lying down, awakened." (DY, p. 47) Rudolph believes that the "Gnostic view of the world demands revelation which comes outside the cosmos and displays the possibility of deliverance; for of himself man cannot escape from his prison in which according to this religion he is shut up. He is not only imprisoned but "asleep" or 'drunken'" (Rudolph, 1983: 119). For more details concerning the "call" and the "awakening", see Jonas 1958: pp. 80 ff.

⁵⁴¹ GRR pp. 127-128.

to look after Adam and he was their leader. He began to teach Adam and his wife Hawa (Eve) wonderful hymns and the right rituals of *masiqta* “Ascension”. He taught them prayers to the Life in order to strengthen their faith. He said to them: “You are raised and established in the place where the good ones are established. Amongst the Manas of Light you will be established.” Manda ḡ-Hiia sat and taught them like a teacher who taught his novice. He prayed for them and blessed them with the bless of the Great Ones. He prayed to Adam to rise and see the world of Light.

When Rūha discovered that all her evil plans were in vain, she decided to leave the scene with her retinue, but only to indulge themselves in new evil plans against the Messenger of Life and Adam.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴² GRR, pp. 127-129.

§ 2.3 - The Third Account of Theogony:

§ 2.3 - The Third Account of Theogony:

In the third theogonic version the following variants are found in addition to the two preceding theogonic texts. In this text the Life instructs Manda d-Hiia concerning the creation. He informs him: (1) when the ܡܠܟܐ *pira* Fruit was inside the *pira*, ܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܗܘܪܐ *malka d-nhūra* (the King of Light) came into being. (2) From the King of Light, the Great Radiant Ayar (Ether) came into being and (3) from the Great Radiant Ayar, ܐܝܪܐ ܫܬܐ ܗܝܬܐ *šata haita* (the Living Fire) came into being (4) By the power of the King of Light, the Life, fruit and Jordan came into being and (5) from the living water (of the Jordan), the Life came into being (6) all the *‘uthras* came into being (Chart C).

In this version of creation we note that the main creator is ܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܗܘܪܐ *malka d-nhūra* the King of Light and not the Mana, and by his power the Life came into being. Also a new element is taking part in the process of creation. It is the ܐܝܪܐ ܫܬܐ ܗܝܬܐ *šata haita* the Living Fire from which ܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܗܘܪܐ *nhūra* (the light) emanated:

Before all the worlds came into being there was this great fruit. When the great fruit was in the great fruit, the King of Light came into existence.⁵⁴³ From the great and glorious King of Light the great ether of radiance came into being. From the great glorious King of Light Ayar Ziwa Rba ܐܝܪܐ ܫܬܐ ܗܝܬܐ (the Great Radiant Ayar) came into being. From Ayar Ziwa Rba the living fire ܐܝܪܐ ܫܬܐ ܗܝܬܐ *šata haita*

⁵⁴³ In the Gnostic (Mandaic) dualism there are two rival kings: *malka d-nhura* (the king of light) and *malka d-hšuka* (the king of darkness). Cf. Mazdaean cosmology: “In the beginning Ohrmazd (the Spirit of Good) was on high and dwelt in the Endless Light: he was characterized by omniscience and wisdom which some call Religion (*dēn*). Ahriman (the Spirit of Evil) was in the depths and dwelt in the endless Darkness: he was slow in knowledge and his will was to do harm. Between the kingdoms of light and darkness the Void which some call Vāy” (Zaehner 1955: 91, cited from *Greater Bundahišn*).

was brought into being.⁵⁴⁴ From the living fire, the light *نور* *nhūra* came into being. By the power of the King of Light, Life came into being and the great fruit. The great fruit came being, and in it the Jordan came into being. The great Jordan came into being. The great Jordan came into being, there came into being the living water. The radiant and resplendent water came into being, and from the living water, I, the Life, came into being. I, the Life, came into being, and then all the *uthras* came into being.⁵⁴⁵

§ 2.3.1 - The King of Light:

The King of Light is not mentioned in the opening of the prayers in the different chapters of the Manadaean scriptures. It is the Life and Manda d-Hiia (the Gnosis of Life) who enjoy this privilege. The King of Light has no role in the Mandaean rituals and rarely mentioned in their scrolls and he is mentioned only once in tractate III (The Story of Creation) of the Ginza. But the King of Light remains a major player in the dualist system of Mandaic Gnosticism.⁵⁴⁶ Whether the Mandaeans represented the “King of Light” as their “one god” to prove to the Moslems, after their invasion to Iraq in the sixth century, that they were monotheist in order to avoid either converting into Islam or put to death,⁵⁴⁷ remains an issue which needs to be

⁵⁴⁴ GRR p. 91: 17 f.

⁵⁴⁵ GRR pp. 91: 17 ff.

⁵⁴⁶ The Manicheans believed that the “King of the Paradise of Light”, who is God Most High, brought the revelation to Mani when he was twelve years old. Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist*, Beirut (1994); English translation: Dodge, L., London (1970) p. 774:

فلما تم له اثنتا عشرة سنة اتاه الوحي، على قوله، من ملك جنان النور، وهو الله تعالى عما يقوله وكان الملك الذي جاءه بالوحي يسمى التوم، وهو بالنبطية، ومعناه: القرين، فقال له اعتزل هذه الملة، فاست من أهلها، وعليك بالنزاهة وترك الشهوات، ولم يأذن لك أن تظهر لحدثائك سرك، فلما أتم له أربع وعشرون سنة اتاه التوم فقال: قد حان لك أن تخرج فتنادي بأمرك.

⁵⁴⁷ All none Moslems had to prove to the Moslem invaders that they were people of the book. All “infidels” had to either convert to Islam or put to death. Some sects preferred to follow the *Taqia*; that is pretend to be people of the book in order to avoid certain death. The *Taqia* (مبدأ) was originated from Islam itself and means “hypocritical” or “prevention”. It is a

There is no name like his name, and there is no one that can name him by his (real) name, there is no one that can name him by his (real) title (or: nature).⁵⁵⁸

§ 2.3.2 - زياء نهرىسكه Ziwa uNhūra Radiance and Light:

Radiance is the active and the male power of light,⁵⁵⁹ which accompanied the great Manas in their first emanation.⁵⁶⁰ Radiance in ‘the mystical teachings or inner gnosis of Mandaeans’ represent the male factor, “whereas *nhura* light represent its female complement.”⁵⁶¹ Radiance is considered the ancient Primal Father and referred to as pure “gold”, where as the Light is the ancient Primal Mother and referred to as “silver”:

Now as to these two mysteries of *ziwa* and *nhura* (radiant light and diffuse light): know that they are the ancient primal Father and Mother. Pure gold is the mystery of the Father, its name is Radiance: silver is the Mother's mystery and its name is Light. Silver is the Mother's mystery [symbol] and its name is Light. The Crown is the Father's symbol and its name is Radiance: the myrtle-wreath the symbol of the Mother and its name is "Let there be Light". The "owner of a crown" [*a priest*] is concerned with the mystery of the Father. A Mandaean [*layman*] and his wife are occupied with the mystery of the Mother.⁵⁶²

558 GRR, p. 5; 25. The Text:

⁵⁵⁹ ATŠ, p. 16. Lady Drower comments: “The implication that *ziwa* (radiance is an approximate translation), the syzygy of *nhura*, is an active, creative male principle and light is a receptive (female) principle occurs more than once in ATŠ” (SA p. 6).

⁵⁶⁰ GRR p. 83: 21.

⁵⁶¹ ATŠ, p. 16.

⁵⁶² ATŠ, p. 201, Drower's translation, text collated:

[illegible]

remove from nor approach the other, nor can one distinguish either from its partner, moreover each derives strength from the other. ⁵⁶⁵

The Mandaean literature informs us that Light came into existence by the power of the high divinities at the beginning of existence. It is the Light of the Great First Life which together with the Radiance encircle the Mana (the first intelligence):

Let there be light, let there be light! Let there be light of the Great First Life!⁵⁶⁶ . Before the *Mana* there is light, behind the *Mana* glory, and at either side of the Mana radiance, brilliance and purity.⁵⁶⁷

During the baptism rituals, the priest proceeds towards the river, wades up in water, opens the gate of Light and compresses the evil elements of Darkness with his staff after the recitation of certain prayers. He commences these prayers with the name of the Life, then he praises the Radiance and the Light:

In the name of the Life! Praised be the First Great Radiance and praised the Great First Light!⁵⁶⁸ “Strengthened and enhanced is he great mystery of radiance, light and glory which resteth on the mouth of the Great Life.”⁵⁶⁹

Radiance and Light play an essential role in the religious life of the sect. For example; it is the duty of every Naṣōraean (Mandaeen) to carry out every single detail of the ritual in a perfect way, even when he wears his ritual *rasta* “outfit” and put on his turban, because his outfit symbolizes the Radiance and the Light:

⁵⁶⁵ ATŠ, p. 213. (Mandaean ATŠ (54) pp. 69-70). Drower's translation, text collated:

ہولیکہ کے پسینے ہولیکہ کے سچے بہت سے ایک سہ کلمہ لہجہ سمک (لہجہ سمک) نام، یہ کہی ہے کہ
سمک کے رکھنے والے ہیں سن کلمہ پہنچی رہیں سینکڑوں سال پہلے

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1: 3).

567 CP, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁸ CP, p. 154.

569 CP, p. 5.

dressed in the garments of living fire.⁵⁷⁶ Manda d-Hiia used *klila d'sata haita* the crown of the living fire in his battle with the King of Darkness.⁵⁷⁷ The “living fire” is mentioned in Manichaean literature in phrases such as the “ships of living fire and water”⁵⁷⁸ or the “wheels of the living fire”.⁵⁷⁹

§ 2.3.4 - ܘܬܪܐ The 'Uthra:

First of all, we have to admit that the word *'uthra* is not easy to explain. The *Mandaic Dictionary* defines the word as “wealth” according to Nöldke,⁵⁸⁰ whereas Drower defines it as an “eternal being; a spirit of light and life.”⁵⁸¹ The word is derived from a root meaning “to increase”, “be abounding”,⁵⁸² and unlike *malkia* who are sometimes good and sometimes evil, *'uthras* are invariably pure and beneficent.⁵⁸³ These beings of light are comparable with the *yazatas* in Zoroastrianism. The *yazatas* (like the *'uthras*) cannot be rendered as “gods” or “angels” but they are associated with the divine and perform mundane tasks. In contrast to the abhorred *daevas*, the *yazatas* were capable of being worshipped. They are also the guardians of the

⁵⁷⁶ GRR, 299: 19. The text:

ܠܟܠܐ ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܠܝܬܐ

⁵⁷⁷ GRR, p. 99.

⁵⁷⁸ Gardner & Lieu, 2004: 15.

⁵⁷⁹ Manichaean Psalm-Book, Part II CCXIX, edited by Allberry C.R.C., Stuttgart (1938), p. 2.

⁵⁸⁰ MD, p. 347. Nöldke defines ܘܬܪܐ *'uthra* as “Reichtum” “wealth” (MG, p. 104 n. 4, Arabic ثراء). In the Manichean Psalms of Thomas the sons of light are also called “the Riches” (Widengren, 1961: 93-4). Drower associates *'uthra* with the Syriac ܘܬܪܐ “to be rich”, “abounding” and finds no reason why *'uthra* not to be translated as “wealth” and she does not agree with Lidzbarski’s suggestion that the Mandaean chose the word *'uthra* to avoid confusion with Jewish and Moslem names for angels. She reaches the conclusion that the *'uthri* might originally have been life-spirits bringing fertility and wealth in the shape of spring and rain. She bases her conclusion on W. Robertson Smith, who mentioned in his book *Religion of the Semites*, that there was a god in South Arabia named Athtar who presided over irrigation, and claimed that *'athari* referred to being watered by the sky and fountains. (MII pp. 94-5, n.2).

⁵⁸¹ ATŠ, p. 15.

⁵⁸² SA, p. 56.

⁵⁸³ ATŠ, p. 15.

These beings are made of light, which emanated from radiance and from the living water, which gushed out from the Light. They are not First Emanations, but they were created by them:

In the land of Light, the Life existed; the Life existed in the land of Light. And from the Life, water poured forth, water poured forth from the Life. And from the water Radiance emanated, and from Radiance, Light emanated, and from Light the *uthras* came into being, who are standing and praising the Life.⁵⁸⁷

The *uthras* are not like human beings. They do not need to communicate by means of vocal sounds; they communicate telepathically. They can read the thoughts of each other and converse to each other by means of baptism and *masiqtas* (rituals of ascension of the soul) and prayers. They are so swift and light and glow more than the stars (lamps):

And that which conveys the intercourse of *uthras* is the sublime ether. And they are alike in the meditations of their hearts, talking with a person with their thoughts and not speaking (*with their mouths*). *Uthras* converse with one another by means of their baptism and *masiqtas* and their devotional prayers: the resemble stars which quickly come out and go in, the one with its fellow (- star), for they are swifter than the wind and as brilliant as lamps.⁵⁸⁸

The *uthras* are ancient and older than earth and the Planets :

⁵⁸⁷ GRR book 15: 20 p. 442: 11. The text:

[illegible]

⁵⁸⁸ ATŠ, p. 213 (Mandaean ATŠ p. 69), the text:

[illegible]

Book III of the *Ginza Rba* tells us that countless battalions of *uthras* came into being when the Life called forth “the Second Life”. One of these *uthras* was Abatur, the eldest son of the Second Life who advised his father to defy the Life and create a new world.⁵⁹² They live with the sublime world of the King of Light in his abode that is translucent and bright, with great crowns on their heads. ⁵⁹³

The Mandaean avoid using the word (*malka*) for the heavenly beings. *Malkia*, “kings”, apart from its literal and derived meaning when applied to priests, is a term which may indicate evil beings as well as good: there is a *malka d-nhura* (king of light) and *malka d-hšuka* (king of darkness):

Alaha (god) descended from his loftiness and assumed the shape of *malakia* angels. The *malakia* angels put on the (masquerade) of demons and day by day they pervert the minds of men. They clench to the necks of priests, slaughterers and oracle-tellers and eat from their flesh until they are full. And drink from their blood until they are satisfied. They speak with (false) wisdom and deception and change the times.⁵⁹⁴

In the story of creation it is written that the higher deity, the Great *Mana*, bestowed the title “the king of the *uthras*” on Manda d-Hiia before sending him down to put an end to the mutiny of the Second Life’s *uthras*:

You are the king of *uthras*, the Lord of the *kušta* (covenant) and the Creator of the treasures, we give authority upon all the worlds of Light

[illegible]

⁵⁹² GRR book 3 p. 84.

⁵⁹³ GRR books 1 and 2 contain detailed description of the *uhtras* and their world of light.

⁵⁹⁴ GRR book 5: 2 pp. 201: 25, 202. The text:

پس از هفتاد و یک سال که از تأسیس این دانشگاه می‌گذشت، در سال ۱۳۷۲، در جریان سی و دومین جلسه هیأت مدیره، به منظور ارتقاء سطح علمی و پژوهشی و همچنین توسعه مراکز آموزشی و پژوهشی، تصمیم گرفته شد که مراکز آموزشی و پژوهشی را به صورت مستقل و به نام مراکز تخصصی و پژوهشی اعلام کند. در این راستا، در سال ۱۳۷۲، مراکز تخصصی و پژوهشی را به صورت مستقل و به نام مراکز تخصصی و پژوهشی اعلام کرد.

and the *uthras* of light who dwell in the *škinas* and upon the underworld of darkness.⁵⁹⁵

Those beings of light are made up of many kinds and fall into earths, *škinas*, Jordans, trees, *uthras*, and angels, as well as radiance, light, and brightness which rest upon them, and no borders separate them.⁵⁹⁶

§ 2.3.5 - ملکہ عہدہ *alma d-nhūra* The World of Light:

The worlds of darkness and the worlds of light are Body and Counterpart, (they are complements) of one another. Neither can remove from or approach the other, nor can one distinguish either from its partner, moreover each derives strength from the other.⁵⁹⁷

The Ginza Rba portrays the World of Light as a world of fragrance, in which there is no vile odor; a world of eternal life, in which there is no death; pure without evil; a world of goodness without hatred; a world of living water, in whose aroma kings rejoice:

The world, in which he (the King of Light) stands, has no demise:
A world of radiance and light, in which there is no darkness,
a world of calm, in which there is no disturbance,
a world of justice, in which there is no chaos of confusion,
a world of fragrance, in which there is no despicable smell,
a world of eternal life, in which there is no demise or death,
a world of living waters, in whose fragrance kings rejoice,
a world of goodness, in which there is no evil,

595 GRR p. 86: 21f. The text:

[illegible]

⁵⁹⁶ GRR, book I, p. 11: 17.

⁵⁹⁷ ATŠ, p. 213. (Mandaean ATŠ (54) pp. 69-70) .The text:

نہایت سے نہایت کے درمیان میں ایک ایسی جگہ ہے (میں نے اسے) لکھا ہے کہ یہ ایک
جگہ ہے جہاں پر کلمہ پڑھا جائے اس کے لئے یہ ایک ایسی جگہ ہے جس کے لئے یہ ایک ایسی جگہ ہے

The world of Light is a metaphysical world beyond the reach of the evil Planets. Physics does not apply and no gravity is needed; it is independent in its own laws:

Their earth does not rest on anvils (: supports), their firmament does not rotate on wheels, the seven stars do not pass over them, and the Five and the Twelve do not control their destiny.⁶⁰²

§ 2.3.6 - الملك عسكويه *alma d-hšuka* The World of Darkness:

The World of Darkness is in contrast to the World of Light.⁶⁰³ The World of Darkness is dominated by all kinds of demons and monsters and ruled by the King of Darkness. According to the Mandaean, the earth of Darkness is located to the south of the earth of Light,⁶⁰⁴ beneath the earth of Darkness:

Beyond the earth of light downwards and beyond the earth Tibil, in the South there is that earth of darkness.⁶⁰⁵

The composition of the World of Darkness is different from the World of Light and do not resemble in any way that of the World of Light:

It has a form which is different and isolate from the earth of light, for they are (both) different from each other in every quality and shape.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰² GRR p. 13: 8. The text:

[illegible]

⁶⁰³ Manichaeism teaches that light and darkness are: "Like two kings fighting each other, who have been enemies from the beginning and each of whom respectively has his own territory, darkness by coincidence rose up out of its limits and attached light." (Gardner and Lieu, 2004: 182).

⁶⁰⁴ The Manicheans believe that the realm of the King of Darkness is located to the south of the Kingdom of Life (Gardner and Lieu, 2004: 12).

⁶⁰⁵ GRR 333: 13:

لکھ ک ایں ہیکہ لے پستکہ لیں ا لکم ک ایں ہیکہ ایں یکاں ایں یکاں ایں یکاں لسم سے ہیکہ لسم سے

606 GRR 333: 15:

They stand and plot in evilness and stand and forge weapons.⁶¹⁷ I beheld the black water in it, which rose up boiling, seething and bubbling. And whoever enters there dies, and whoever beholds it is scorched. I beheld the dragons, which were hurled there and writhe about. I beheld the dragons of every kind and every colour. I beheld the chariots of darkness, which do not resemble one another. I beheld the wicked rebels, as they are seated in their chariots. I beheld the wicked rebels, how they are arrayed with weapons of evil. They are arrayed with weapons of evil, and plot evil against the Place of Light. They were all arrayed with weapons and seated before him, the King of Darkness.⁶¹⁸

§ 2.3.7- (ܡܠܟܐ ܕܗܫܘܟܐ) *malka d-hšuka* The King of Darkness ('Ur):

The Mandaean myth portrays the King of Darkness ('Ur) in different forms and shapes. Sometimes he is a gigantic reptile where his dragon nature appears and sometimes he is represented as a snake biting its tail (as he is drawn on the Mandaean talisman the *skandola*).⁶¹⁹ In her book *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* Lady Drower gave a Mandaean drawing representing 'Ur in the form of a louse whose body contains the worlds which extend towards the tail, seven in number: the first is the *maṭarta* of Šamiš, the second is the world of *mšuni kušta* (the Mandaean ideal world), the third is the world of the Mandaeans and the rest are *maṭarthas* (watch-houses). Above 'Ur are the seven heavens and under his belly, which is of fire, there is

⁶¹⁷ GRR 97: 2 f.

⁶¹⁸ GRR 90: 7 f.

⁶¹⁹ In the Mandaean talismanic seal ("Skandola") 'Ur is portrayed as a serpent encircling the other elements of evil; the hornet, the scorpion and the lion (MII p. 38). On the other hand, Mead asserts that 'Ur is originally the Chaldean *Deus Lunus* (snake); he is the oldest son of Rūha, the world-mother, and corresponds in some respects with the Yaldabaōth of "Ophite" origin (See Mead, 1924: 35 n. 2). Cf. Syriac incantation bowl 117ES where an image of a snake is surrounding the text and eating its own tail (Segal, 2000: 147 plate 134). See also C. H. Gordon, 'Leviathan: Symbol of Evil', apud *Biblical Motifs, Origins and Transformations*, ed. A. Altmann, Cambridge, (1966), 1-9.

§ 2.3.8 - The Army of the King of Darkness:

The forces of the World of Darkness consist of demons, *dewis*, (evil) spirits, *hmurthas* “amulet-spirits”, *liliths*, *kuris* “temple-spirits”, *prikis* “shrine-spirits”, *patikris* “idol-demons”, *arkonis* “archons”, *malakis* “angels”, *nalais* “vampires”, *niulis* “hobgoblins”, *pigas* “misadventure demons”, *pilgis* “mutant demons”, *laṭabis* “devils”, *lihanis* “net-spirits”, *gadultas* “ghosts”, and *saṭanis* “Satans”, all the hateful forms of darkness of every kind and variety, male and female of darkness.⁶³³ These creatures are *haškia* “gloomy”, *kumia* “black”, *ṭupšania* “filthy”, *mriddia* “rebellious”, *rgizia* “furious”, *zidania* “wrathful”, *zihirania* “venomous”, *saklia* “foolish”, *ndidia* “repulsive”, *ṣahnia* “stinking” and *zapuria* “putrid”. Some among them are *harašia* “mute”, *ṭrišia* “deaf”, *ṭmimia* “insensible”, *tahmia* “dull”, *algia* “stuttering”, *dugia* “unhearing”, *gugia* “babbling”, *pigia* “idiots”, *šgišia* “frightful”, *laiadita* “ignorant”; some among them are *hašipia* “arrogant”, *hamimia* hot-headed, *taqipia* “powerful”, *haripia* “harsh”, *rugzania* “ill-tempered”, *raktania* “lustful”, *bnia zma* “children of blood”, (of) fanned fire, and overwhelming blaze. They partake of every kind of form: some of them crawl on their bellies, some move about in water, some fly, some have many feet like the reptiles of the earth, and some carry a hundred [...]. They have molars and incisors in their jaws. . . . The taste of their trees is (like) poison and

John, had eyes like burning lightning that flashed. He is the god who brings about Heimarmene" (Ibid).

⁶³³ GRR 334: 11. The text:

[illegible]

suffers and appears in several realms at the same time.’⁶⁴³ Rūha is the leader of the underworld forces and the “entity incorporation powers of darkness which the light-world had to conquer.”⁶⁴⁴ The Mandaean use the term *ܢܝܫܝܡܬܐ* *nišimta* for “soul” and *ܪܗܐ* *rūha* for “spirit”. The expression *rūha* “spirit” stands on the lower level and according to Rudolph corresponds to the “soul” (*psychē*) in the Hellenistic sources.⁶⁴⁵ Rūha is the immaterial part of man which influenced by physical desires.⁶⁴⁶ Rūha’s symbolical colour, according to the Mandaean, is sky-blue,⁶⁴⁷ and can appear as a woman of extreme beauty either in her blue mantle or naked, apparently, to seduce men.⁶⁴⁸

In Book VI of the *Ginza Rba* (the book of “Dinanukt”) Rūha describes her self as “light and darkness”, “error and truth”, “destruction and structure” etc., in clear dualist terms:

I am the life which exists since eternity. I am the *kušta* which was from afore-the beginning. I am the radiance, I am the light, I am the death, I am the life, I am the darkness, I am the light, I am the error, I am the truth, I am the destruction and I am the structure, I am the offence (accidental disqualification for ritual etc.) and its purification. I am the outstanding being who is prior to that (one) who built the heavens and earth.⁶⁴⁹

ܡܡܠܝܠܐ ܒܗܘܟܡܬ ܗܪܪܐ *mamlila bhukmat hrara* “she talks with the wisdom of an illusionist” (GRR book 3, p. 90: 5).

⁶⁴³ Buckley, HR 1980: 260. Jonas has no answer to “how this figure ‘Wisdom’, or at least its name, came to be combined in Gnostic thought with the moon-, mother-, and love-goddess of Near Eastern religion, to form that ambiguous figure encompassing the whole scale from the highest to the lowest, from the most spiritual to the utterly sensual (as expressed in the very combination “Sophia-Prunikos”, “Wisdom the Whore”)” (Jonas 1958: 176-177).

⁶⁴⁴ Buckley, HR 1982: 63. In her research about the Rūha, Buckley found striking resemblances between Rūha and “The thunder: Perfect Mind” in the Nag Hammadi Library (see also Buckley, HR, 1980: 264).

⁶⁴⁵ Rudolf, 1983: 91.

⁶⁴⁶ ATŠ p. 15.

⁶⁴⁷ MII p. 149.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid 149-6.

⁶⁴⁹ GRR book 6 ‘the book of Dinanokt’ p. 241: 6f.

§ 2.3.9.1 - رُحَا Rūha: The Mother of the Seven Planets, the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac and the Five Monsters:

When Rūha (the goddess of the Underworld and mother of all evil) ⁶⁵⁰ realized that Ptahil was having difficulties in his first attempt to create the world, she committed incest three times with ‘Ur (the King of Darkness)⁶⁵¹ in order to produce the luminaries. In the first time she approached Ur, as his mother, and said to him, “Arise and sleep with your mother and you will be freed from your fetter!” He slept with her and after seven days she bore the Seven (planets),⁶⁵² but her offspring did not make her happy: “when she beheld them, her heart fell from its support”. In the second time she approached him as his sister, and said to him, “I am your sister; if you sleep with me your strength will be twice as much.” He slept with her and after twelve days she bore the Twelve (signs of the Zodiac) and again they did not please her. In the third time, she approached him as his daughter and said to him, “Rise, my father, and behold your daughter! Embrace me and kiss me and sleep with me and

[illegible]

⁶⁵⁰ Jonas writes, 'Rūha, literally "spirit." The perversion of this term to denote the highest personification of evil is an interesting episode in the history of religion, all the more paradoxical in view of the fact that the full title of this anti-divine figure is Rūha d-Qudša, i.e., "the Holy Spirit." (Jonas 1958: 72 n. 25). DA gives Rūha seven names: "she enflames the womb", "treasure", "She-lusted-after", "She-conserved", "Drop", "Qin"(the queen, mistress of darkness. Often identified with Rūha) , "She-loved-these". DA p. 38.

⁶⁵¹ The Mandaeen Leviathan, the father of the Seven (planets), the Twelve (signs of the Zodiac) and the Five (the planets less the Sun and the Moon). Some scholars connect him with Tiamat, the chaos monster who was killed by Marduk. (Jonas 1958: 117). He is the offspring of Rūha and Gaf (one of the Giants of the World of Darkness) (see book 5 of the Ginza Rba). He is the dragon which encircles the whole world and that no one can match his power (GRL p. 11: 11). Budge writes, "In some portion of the Black Water dwells a great she-devil called Rūha, and her husband 'Ur, who is the god of Darkness, and is the great antagonist of the god of Light. Here we have we have a cosmogony derived from the ancient Sumerians, and Tiamat, Kingu and Marduk under other names, and we may regard the Mandaeans as the representatives of the ancient worshippers of Ea, the great Water-god of Eridu" (Budge 1930: 240).

⁶⁵² The seven "planets" were gods in the Babylonian pantheon, including the sun and the moon. (Wilson, 1958: 10). Gnosticism, in general, considered the seven planets as the seven spheres which separated the soul from its heavenly home (Ibid 105).

gaze your fill at the world.” Again he slept with her and she conceived five “monsters” (the planets without the Sun and the Moon), and again they were not what Rūha wished for.⁶⁵³ Rūha could not achieve her goals; instead she lost her magical powers and failed to free her son Ur from his fetters.⁶⁵⁴

§ 2.3.9.2 - ܪܗܐ ܡܫܬܢܝܬܐ *rūha maṣṭanīta* “Rūha, the Seductress”:

Rūha ܩܕܝܫܐ “Holy-Spirit”⁶⁵⁵ is an epithet for Rūha, a personification of the emotional, lower and feminine elements in human personality.⁶⁵⁶ She is the “desirous” or “to make love sick” a symbol of ܒܙܢܩܝܬܐ *baznaqita* “lust”.⁶⁵⁷ Rūha’s epithet “*qudša*” corresponds to a category of cultic staff of Ištar which includes female

⁶⁵³ GRR p. 112: 14 ff. These three acts of incest show clearly that the planets are the product of evil. Zaehner stated that consanguineous marriage is of Magian origin and that the Rūha and Ur act of incest is similar to Ohrmazd’s consanguineous marriages (intercourse) with his mother, his sister and his daughter. Zaehner mentions, according to the Acts of Pusai, that the Sun, Moon, and stars were the children of Ohrmazd. These three consanguineous marriages were considered the most holy of all among the Zoroastrians (Zaehner 1955: 154, 5). Jonas suggests that “the spheres are the seats of the Archons, especially of the “Seven” that is, of the planetary gods borrowed from the Babylonian pantheon” (Jonas 1958: 43). (In spite of “archon” is of western source, we find ܐܪܚܢ *arkun* “archon” in some Mandaean texts such as the Ginza p. 334: 14, “archon” also occurs in Manichaeism (see Widengren 1961, English translation 1965: 55).

⁶⁵⁴ Zaehner could establish some resemblances between Rūha and her son Ur on the one hand, and between Āz and Ahriman on the other. Āz, who belongs to Zervanite demonology in old Persia, is the “personification of concupiscence – acquisitiveness, gluttony, and lust, and perhaps much more besides.” In this respect (based on Alexander of Lycopolis) he writes: “Āz is the mother of all the demons and the greatest of them. In the diabolical hierarchy she is always mentioned first, taking precedence over Ahriman. Her relationship with the latter is exactly parallel to the relationship of the female Rūhā to the male Ur in the Mandaean scriptures. Ur is the king of darkness; Rūhā is his mother and stands for totality of evil.” (For more details concerning the Persian Demon Āz, and her resemblances with the Mandaean Rūha, see Zaehner 1955: 166).

⁶⁵⁵ Rūha has other epithets: ܪܗܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ *rūha dqudša dlibat* ‘*stra amamit šuma* “she is Rūha d-Qudša whose name is “Libat-Ištar-Amamit” (GRR p. 62: 19) Rūha d-Qudša is not mentioned in esoteric writings (SA p. 47).

⁶⁵⁶ CP, p. 291 n. 2. Jonas believes that the perversion of the term *rūha* “spirit” to “donate the highest personification of evil is an interesting episode in the history of religion” (Jonas 1958: 72, n. 26).

⁶⁵⁷ CP 291 n. 2.

§ 2.3.9.3 - The End of Rūha and her Believers:

At the end of the worlds Rūha, the Planets together with the wicked and the unbelievers will be swallowed by the great Leviathan 'Ur.⁶⁶⁹

Rūha and *mšīha* (Jesus) and the Planets and all those souls who confess them, will call each other and reach each other, and lead each other by the hand. They are to be bound and fettered and then, like a pomegranate of lead, will depart and fall into ‘Ur, the lord of Darkness, into his huge interior. (Then) smoke will wind up and fire will be fanned and consume ‘Ur, the lord of Darkness and ‘uat Rūha, the liar and the Planets and all those souls who believe in them.⁶⁷⁰

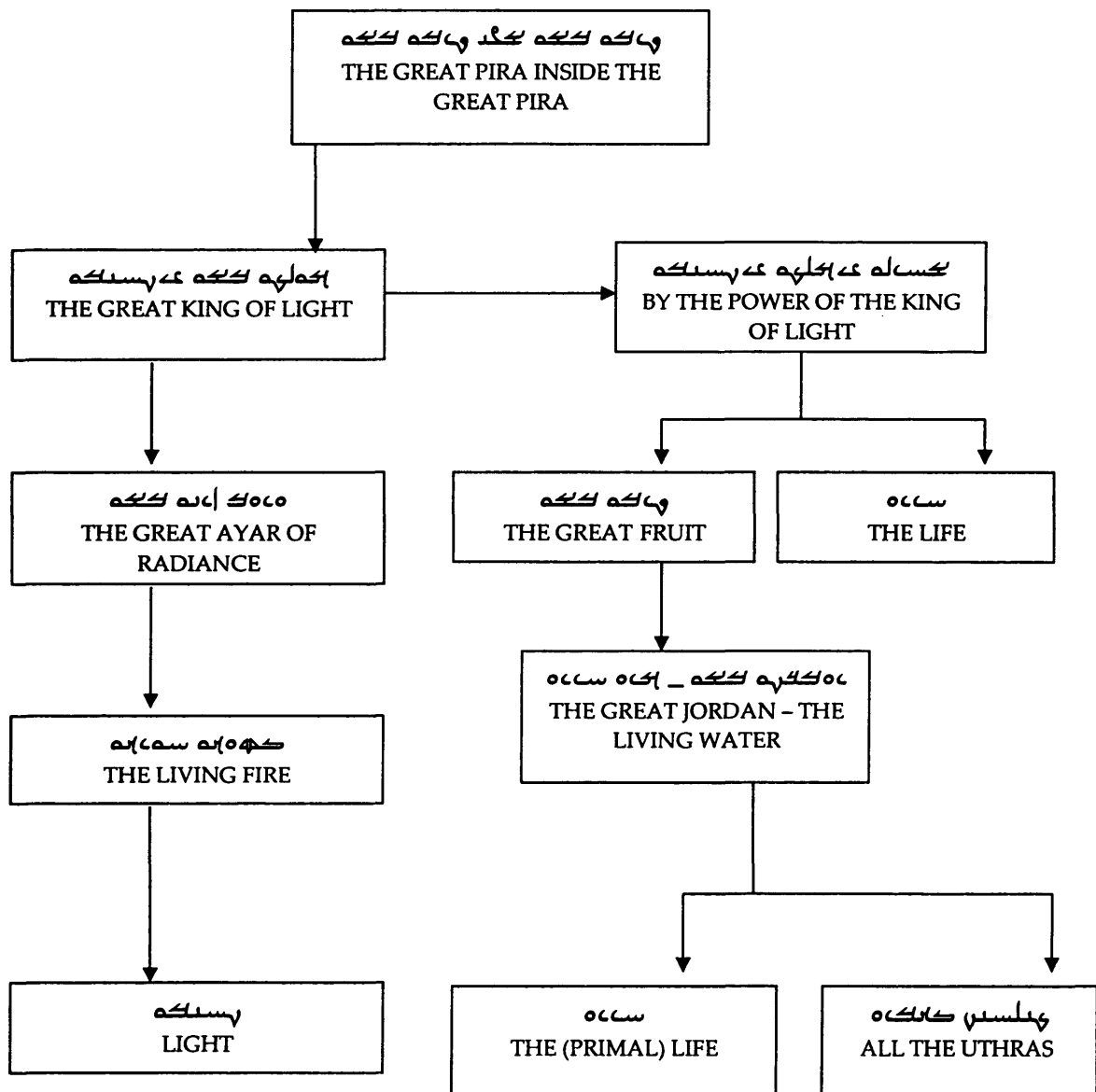
⁶⁶⁹ Pallis, 1926: 64.

⁶⁷⁰ GRR book 5: 5 p. 236: 21f.

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ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

Chart C
GINZA RABA
TEXT 3 TRACTATE III
PAGES 91-92



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